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THE CHILDREN'S POETS

*ANALYSES AND APPRAISALS OF
THE GREATEST ENGLISH AND AMERICAN
POETS FOR CHILDREN*

FOR USE IN NORMAL SCHOOLS, LIBRARY
SCHOOLS, AND HOMES

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YONKERS-ON-HUDSON, NEW YORK
WORLD BOOK COMPANY

1924

WORLD BOOK COMPANY

THE HOUSE OF APPLIED KNOWLEDGE

Established 1905 by Caspar W. Hodgson

YONKERS-ON-HUDSON, NEW YORK

2126 PRAIRIE AVENUE, CHICAGO

There is need for what poetry can give,—the breadth of vision, the enrichment of the memory, the sweep of the imagination, the sympathetic understanding of nature and of our fellow creatures,—and a taste for poetry must be acquired in childhood. Yet the company of those who have written poetry acceptable to children is indeed small. The roll of these poets is made up by no convention of critics, no committee of professors of literature. The names inscribed thereon are chosen by the children themselves, and it is Time that collects and records the votes. It is surely profitable, then, for every one who is concerned with children's reading to consider attentively the work of the writers who have been acclaimed as preëminently the children's poets. The author and the publishers trust that parents, teachers, and librarians will welcome *The Children's Poets* as a book that in its discussion of important though intangible values "Applies the World's Knowledge to the World's Needs"



BCP-1

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PRINTED IN U.S.A.

MAR 27 '24

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TO PHYLLIS
MY WIFE

PREFACE

The Children's Poets is an attempt to analyze the qualities and to appraise the contributions of the most important of the children's poets, and, so far as the author knows, is the first book in this field. It may be that children's poetry has been thought not to be worth study or not to require study. But in this age, when we are attempting to utilize to the full the emotional and artistic elements in literature, and especially in poetry, for the education of children, we cannot afford to overlook the great value in a knowledge and appreciation of the body of children's poetry. Children's poets differ among themselves quite as much as poets for adults: some are of the first class, others of the fourth or fifth class; some rank high in one department, low in others; some possess certain qualities and emphasize certain aspects of life; and all are deserving of study, especially by those who train and educate children.

A word as to the subject matter of this book. I have discussed in full those who seem to me to be the most important and significant poets who have written for children, and have grouped in the Bibliography brief analyses of those who may be termed the minor poets. Some of the poets discussed briefly may be finer poets than some of those discussed at length. But to give an idea of the range and diversity of children's poetry, particular attention was devoted to those who seemed more representative, more typical, those who enlarged the field of children's poetry or introduced new notes.

In order that the book may be of greater service as a compendium of poetry for children and may present a sufficient amount of illustrative material, a group of additional poems is appended to most of the chapters. For some of the poets considered, however, copyright restrictions have made it impossible to present more than a very limited number of poems.

The Children's Poets is really a series of essays, each essay dealing with one author,—in a single instance, with two authors who seem to belong together. Each chapter is therefore a separate unit, yet an integral part of a cycle, to be studied separately and in any order, yet to be reread in the light of the other chapters. This

plan has allowed me greater freedom, in that I could discuss each poet in the manner most appropriate to his work, could follow where he led, and could dispense with rigid formulas. Biographical matter has been used sparingly, and, wherever possible, this has been wrought into the chapter itself rather than dealt with separately and formally.

I hope the somewhat light and personal style of writing will not seem inappropriate. In a subject such as this, even in a book intended for serious study, I have wished to avoid heaviness and formality. The book has cost a great deal of earnest labor, but I have endeavored to remove every mark of the chisel from the statues of the children's poets.

The Children's Poets has been written for the general reader, for parents, for librarians, and specifically for students in normal schools and colleges preparing to teach.

The courtesy of a number of publishing houses in allowing the reprinting of copyright material is hereby acknowledged: Henry Holt and Company have been most generous in their permission to quote from the works of Walter de la Mare; Houghton Mifflin Company have kindly allowed me to use the poems of Lucy Larcom, Celia Thaxter, and Frank Dempster Sherman; Little, Brown and Company have given permission to reprint the poems of Laura Elizabeth Richards; to Charles Scribner's Sons I am indebted for the poems of Eugene Field, and to The Bobbs Merrill Company for those of James Whitcomb Riley.

Mr. Orton Low of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, has given me valuable advice and criticism. Miss Effie Louise Power, of the Pittsburgh Carnegie Library, was of assistance in the work of compiling the bibliographies.

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THE CHILDREN'S POETS

CHAPTER ONE

CHILDREN'S POETRY AND CHILDREN'S POETS

POETRY for children is a special kind of poetry, as distinctive as pastorals, as sonnets, as humorous verse. It is neither higher nor lower than other forms of poetry. It is merely different.

First of all, it is poetry, to be considered as poetry; secondly, it is poetry written specifically for children.

In attempting to analyze children's poetry, therefore, our first task is to pass judgment upon it as poetry. If it ranks high in this test, it is next to be considered as poetry specifically for children; and, if it does not fail of this necessary qualification, it may then be studied for its qualities, its themes, and its values.

Not all poets are children's poets, but all poets have certain characteristics which have a direct bearing on the creation of children's verse. The temperament of a poet strikingly resembles that of a child. In imagination, intuition, emotional intensity, curiosity and wonder, obedience to impulse and the spirit of play, in romanticism and idealism, poets and children are akin. The poet preserves, more than others, the childlike attitude towards life—which, obviously, means that there is such an affinity between poets and children that poets understand and appreciate children and are easily and frequently impelled to write of them and for them.

As all poets, moreover, are sensitive to beauty and romance, and as children and childhood are unquestionably full of a mysterious charm and an elusive suggestiveness—are, in

short, poetic—certain poets are quite naturally inspired to sing of childhood, its emotions and experiences, its joys and aspirations. Most men and women look back on their early life with fondness and indulge in reminiscences of their youth, living over the scenes and incidents of childhood, and thinking somewhat regretfully of the purity, the optimism, and the faith of their past. Many of us, like Charles Lamb, create out of our memories images of ourselves as we were in days gone by, and see, trotting along beside us in country lanes or sitting near us in the solitude of our studies, the little boys and girls we once were—probably much nicer boys and girls than we ever were. And if ordinary men and women with practical views of life are thus moved to re-create their early existence, we may expect certain poets, more richly gifted, more perceptive of what is beautiful and fine, to discover in childhood the themes of their songs.

It is, of course, not a question of a children's poet being greater or less than other poets; he must have the technical power and ability of a true poet, supplemented by such particular powers as are possessed by the specialist in any other department of poetry, such as balladry, nature poetry, or society verse.

As I point out more than once in the following pages, it is not sufficient that a would-be children's poet should love children. He may love them with adoration and descant movingly on the glory and beauty of childhood, and yet fail utterly as a children's poet. There must be added to love a perfect understanding, a power to enter into the child's feelings and to see life from his standpoint. Many of us profess to understand boys and girls and appreciate their thoughts and instincts; but few of us really succeed in escaping from the dark shadow of our own maturity. The

children's poet must project himself, his spirit must take up its abode for the time being in some child's heart; then, when he returns to us with our adult preoccupations, he may tell us what a child is, how he feels, fancies, hopes, fears, bears himself.

There is no other way to the citadel wherein the child entrenches himself. "Except ye become as little children ye cannot enter." Paedology, despite its patiently won lore, has not pierced to the secret; the men of science have not found it. Genius, and genius of the unique kind which none but a few poets possess, is the only "Open, sesame." This is the reason why children's poets are so rare. To have the nature of a child and the intelligence and poise of an artist, to be possessed by the urge of youth and to possess the clarity of experience—that is the combination which produces the children's poet.

Although nearly all poets, as we have seen, are predisposed to write poetry dealing with childhood, some poets are better fitted by nature than others for writing poetry for children. But in any case there must be some immediate incentive, some direct inspiration, some experience or occurrence or situation, some revelation to call forth the poem. That experience which makes most of us interested in children, which enkindles within our hearts a love for children and causes us to call back most clearly the memories of our own youth, is fatherhood or motherhood. Parental love has always been the inspiration of sacrifice and service; it awakens the strongest and holiest feelings. Nothing makes us so much interested in children as having children of our own.

This being so, one would imagine that all children's poets are parents. But when we call the roll of those who have written verse for children, we are struck by the fact that only

a few of them—and these not the greatest—had children of their own. The supreme lyric poets for children, Blake, Stevenson, Christina Rossetti; the founders of the school of moral poetry, Jane and Ann Taylor; the best dialect poet, James Whitcomb Riley; the two greatest nonsense poets, Lear and Carroll;•all these were childless when they wrote their poetry for children. In nearly every instance, as is pointed out elsewhere in this book, these poets were inspired to write verse for children by contact and friendship with other people's children.

I have amused myself at times by bringing this anomaly to the attention of my students. Some of these would have it that fathers and mothers have been too busily employed in taking care of their children to write poetry for them. Others have advanced the theory that having real offspring dispels all the glamor and mystery of childhood; that parents are too close to their subject to be in the proper mood for poetry. There is truth in this. Undoubtedly poets must be somewhat detached from the material and the events of their poetry. Sometimes, it would seem, poets deliberately ignore the concrete, objective themes that lie close at hand, turning their eyes inward in introspection or gazing outward into the distance. Wordsworth has spoken of this:

Most sweet it is with unuplifted eyes
To pace the ground, if path be there or none,
While a fair region round the traveler lies
Which he forbears again to look upon;
Pleased rather with some soft ideal scene,
The work of Fancy, or some happy tone
Of meditation.

But the true explanation of this puzzle lies, I think, in a profound observation made many years ago by John Keble.

Poetry, according to this poet and critic, is a vent for overcharged feelings which have not found their natural outlet through any of the customary channels of life and action. Childless poets, surcharged with parental affection (by reason of memories of their own youth, reinforced perhaps by the accidental companionship of some living child), have vented their pent-up emotions in the creation of poetry for children.

Needless to say, children's poetry idealizes childhood. There is a wistfulness in much of it, a lambent radiance over it. All the dross of youth is burned away; the selfishness and animalism of children are ignored; their faults are forgotten and their virtues magnified. But is not this idealization precisely what we expect and desire and admire in all poetry? We should not criticize children's poetry for presenting images of child life which, reason reminds us, are too delicate and refined. Reason is not to be permitted to usurp the chief place when we are seated at a poetic banquet. We should practice what Coleridge calls "that willing suspension of disbelief which constitutes poetic faith." It is one of the missions of poetry to set up before us the ideals of life, and it is one of the missions of children's poetry to hang before the eyes of children portraits of themselves as they may be, pictures of the child world as it would be if all children were fine-fibered and good and amiable. A child's reach, too, must exceed his grasp.

I hope I am not suggesting that children's poets are all cast in the same mold. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Robert Louis Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses*, for example, is as distinct from Christina Rossetti's *Sing-Song* as *Treasure Island* is from *Goblin Market*. Isaac Watts of the *Divine and Moral Songs for the Use of Children* is the Isaac Watts who wrote *Joy to the World, When I*

Survey the Wondrous Cross, and many other beautiful hymns; he does not alter his nature when he writes for children. Indeed, this is one of the secrets of the craft; the children's poet must express his own personality. Any attempt to posture is an imposture. There must be no attitudinizing, no condescension, no baby talk or pretense. And there need be none, since there are many paths to the child's heart and many methods of appeal, and there remains only the one prime law for each bard of childhood—to reveal himself in his own way.

It is not difficult to generalize concerning the themes suitable for children's poetry. From the very fact that it is for children, certain aspects of life interesting to older people must be eliminated. The mysteries of mortal existence, the baffling tragedies of humanity, the subjective, the philosophical, the psychological—much of that which makes up the power and the glory of poetry for men and women is unsuitable for children. On the other hand, children's poetry will include many aspects of life to which grown-ups pay scant attention: sports and toys, animals and the simpler phases of nature, nonsense, home life, lullabies, scenes and stories of youthful experience,—all the poetic interests of childhood. And even when the themes of the two species of poetry happen to be identical, as in nature poetry, that for children must, obviously, be the more concrete and objective in treatment and the more closely circumscribed. It must not be “juvenilized,” however; the simpler aspects must be selected, consciously or unconsciously, then developed sincerely and adequately, and in a more or less simple style, because the themes demand that kind of handling.

Nor does the simple style imply a denatured diction, a succession of easy, forceless monosyllables, where “ten low

words oft creep in one dull line.” A child will climb over a pretty tall word if only his pleasure in the poem or story have set him running at full speed. The style should not be extremely figurative, yet it should not be too jejune literal. The words should be full of color and warmth, of suggestiveness, of wide connotativeness—essentially different from the more or less matter-of-factness of speech. Metaphors and personification seem to be the favorite figures in children’s poetry, though, of course, a simile is occasionally employed. Generally speaking, the poems should be brief, and the rhymes and structure simple. The lines should be short, and the rhymes come close together. Onomatopœia and alliterative effects are as desirable here as in other poetry, and the singing quality of the verse should be even more pronounced. Usually the rhythm is very regular and the accents emphatic; the recent attempt to write *vers libre* for children is a manifest failure, since the steady and almost invariable pulsation of the beats in the tempo is an inseparable attribute of the verse that children love.

Here again I pause to point out that I am not attempting to pass laws to regulate the construction of verse for children. Doubtless a great creative poet could set at naught all the generalizations here made; but so far as I can determine, these generalizations are firmly grounded on the practice of the most successful children’s poets.

Another word in this connection. Although the poets discussed in the following chapters include no one who has not written specifically for children, I am far from believing that their works should constitute children’s sole poetic nourishment. Any anthology of children’s verse will contain the poems of many writers not mentioned in these pages: Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Scott, Keats, Shelley, Coleridge,

Byron, Tennyson, Macaulay, Kipling, Longfellow, and Whittier. Many splendid poets, especially of the last century, have, in a mood of playfulness or inspired by the Muse of Childhood, written first-rate poems for little folks, though usually but a few of them; and by virtue of the selection of suitable themes and the simplicity, sincerity, and objectivity of their style, many other poets have written verses which, although intended for grown-ups, have been appropriated by children for their own.

I would not advise parents and teachers to attempt the poetical education of their children solely by means of poems designed specifically for children. The older child and the little child, if poetry-minded, should have free entrance to the fields of more inspiring, more invigorating verse, written not especially for the child but for the child-like and the child-hearted, whether young or old in years. It is good for a child to stand on tiptoe now and then.

Yet at the same time, I would enter a strong protest against the theories of those self-complacent literary folk who would banish the children's poets from the nursery and the schoolroom. When Miss Agnes Repplier, for example, in her essay on *The Children's Poets (Essays in Idleness)*, points out that she, in common with Andrew Lang and Coleridge and Rossetti and others of the bookish tribe, scorned those poets who wrote for children, preferring Byron and Scott, it is not amiss to remind her that most children are not embryo poets and essayists with an immediate and intuitive love of the great classics, with latent literary genius awaiting only the appearance of Homer and Shakespeare to call it to a realization of its powers. Place the average little child—and the term “average child” covers more than nine tenths of all children—in a library with the children's poets

Children's Poetry and Children's Poets

and the greatest of poets for adults, and he will inevitably turn to Stevenson, to Blake, to Christina Rossetti, to Lear and Carroll and Mother Goose. Miss Repplier makes the same blunder that the devotees of the classic cult have always made in their pronouncements as to what is good juvenile reading—the blunder of attributing to children the unusual interests and discriminating tastes and artistic temperament which distinguished themselves as children. Let us keep it in mind that we must make provision not only for the few children who are blessed with the five poetical talents but also---and chiefly—for the many children who have only one or two.

There is, of course, a danger of going to the other extreme, the danger of feeding children upon the infantile in poetry. Primary teachers are all too likely to catch up fatuous and insipid bits of rubbishy doggerel out of the primary journals and other carry-alls, poems that are babyish and insincere, and use these as a means of introducing children to the delights of verse. One can see this going on in almost any kindergarten or primary grade, just as one hears the silly little songs about dolls and flowers and the pleasures of attending school, instead of the splendid folk songs and plantation melodies and really musical airs available for children. Teachers are apt to ignore the first and fundamental principle of children's poetry: that it be authentic poetry, not a cheap imitation.

If the poetry written for children is sincere and true, if it is written with beautiful art and not manufactured according to a recipe, it performs a vital service in the cultural and emotional education of the child. I think I am safe in saying that the poets analyzed in the essays that follow are real artists, not all great artists, perhaps, but fine, earnest, and intelligent ones. They loved and understood boys and girls

and their "tricks and manners," and they wrote verse that has earned for them the gratitude and affection of multitudes of little folks. Taken all together, they provide a bounteous and varied feast of good things: beauty of sound and picture and thought, wisdom and inspiration, gayety and seriousness, and generous emotions. And if occasionally they seem to older folks somewhat too obvious and childish, let us remind ourselves of what the little elf-man replied when some one professed astonishment at his diminutive stature—

"I'm just as big for me," he said,
"As you are big for you!"

CHAPTER TWO

MOTHER GOOSE

No list of children's poets is complete without the name of Mother Goose. The Mother Goose jingles, nursery rhymes, children's nonsense verses,—call them what you will,—as they come first to the children's attention, remain first in their affections. They are hallowed by the associations of generations of children, they are fragrant with the incense of childish pleasure and love. Their charm never loses its power nor their beauty its luster. The stream never runs dry, though its sparkling waters have refreshed generations of children; the magic vial never loses its virtue, however long exposed to the common air; the Fortunatus purse remains filled with gold, however often it has supplied the needs of spendthrift youth.

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu.

What is the secret of the perennial charm of these childhood jingles? They are as beautiful to little children of today as they were to little children of a hundred years ago. Nothing can take their place: there are no substitutes.

“Why don't you get some new toys?” says the modern mother to the toy-dealer. “You are selling the very same kind I had when I was a little girl.”

“Ah, madam,” replies the wise old toy-dealer, “what need of new toys, when we have new children all the time?”

Who was the author of those immortal rhymes? We tell ourselves very often that we need not concern ourselves about an author if we have the results of his genius. But we can-

not satisfy ourselves with an abstraction. Our desire to visualize, to account for, will not allow us to be satisfied with the beauty of the product until we have tried to find out something about the producer. In this case, the question is: Who was Mother Goose? It is a question which seems to call for detailed discussion.

The name 'Mother Goose' seems to have originated in France and is an instance of the Gallic tendency to personify birds and beasts in fairy lore and elsewhere. It was current in France at an early date. A group of fanciful tales which appeared in French literature were alluded to in a French poem of 1650 as tales of *la mère L'Oye*. Collin de Plancy says the French have a proverbial saying that any incredible tale belongs to the time when Queen Bertha spun and, Queen Bertha having been cursed with a foot like a goose, they call such a tale a Queen Goose or Mother Goose story. In the year 1697, Charles Perrault published eight of these stories under the title *Contes de ma Mère L'Oye* (*Tales of my Mother Goose*). The Perrault stories—stories, not rhymes—were translated into English by Robert Sambur and published at London in the year 1729. In the course of time, they were republished, as *Tales of Mother Goose*, by John Newberry at his house in St. Paul's Churchyard and, under the Newberry imprint, attained a great success. The date of Newberry's first edition of these tales is uncertain, but the late Charles Welsh, one of the successors as well as the historian of the Newberry publishing house, shows that the seventh edition was printed May 16, 1777, and the eighth in the year 1780. Newberry was a famous publisher of children's books, and many and quaint are the titles shown in his advertisements. Finally, he decided to publish a book of children's favorite nursery rhymes; and the Mother Goose

tales having been successful, it was, as Mr. Welsh says, quite in accordance with Newberry's practice to utilize the name Mother Goose for his melodies of the nursery.

The first edition of Newberry's *Mother Goose's Melody, or Sonnets for the Cradle* was prepared prior to 1767. There is evidence that Oliver Goldsmith wrote the Preface and the prose maxims, or footnotes, which accompany the verses. So far as can be proved, the first Newberry edition was the first collection of nursery rhymes ever made and published under the title of Mother Goose.

The Newberry edition was not long in crossing the Atlantic. Isaiah Thomas reprinted it at Worcester, Massachusetts, about 1785, reproducing it with the same pagination and many of the same illustrations. In 1824-25, Munroe and Francis reprinted it at Boston, but the Munroe and Francis edition differed in many details from its predecessors. It is accessible to all students of the subject in the facsimile of the 1833 edition, published by Lee and Shepard in 1905, for which the Reverend Edward Everett Hale wrote the introduction. This is the Boston *Mother Goose* upon which Boston grew up and waxed literary. But in considering the origin of the name Mother Goose it is necessary for us to examine a curious set of circumstances, the result of which seems to offer a most remarkable literary coincidence.

In the early years of the eighteenth century there lived in Boston a well-known family of the name of Goose. This family is said to have come from England. The name appears in the Boston records, and the graves of certain members of the family are to be found in the Old Granary Burying Ground there. From England, also, came a certain Thomas Fleet. Fleet was a publisher and printer, and he set up his shop at Boston, in Pudding Lane, now Devonshire

Street. He married Elizabeth Goose of that city, June 8, 1715, the ceremony being performed by no less a person than the celebrated Cotton Mather. So much is fact. Legend continues the story and relates that in the year 1719 (this was ten years before the Perrault stories were translated into English by Sambur, and probably some fifty years before the first Newberry collection) Fleet published a book called *Mother-Goose's Melodies* at his shop in Pudding Lane, and that either his wife or his mother-in-law became connected in the public mind with the authorship thereof. No copy of this early edition of Mother Goose appears to be extant. If such a book really appeared, it is probable enough that Dame Goose of Boston, with a lively and accurate memory of the English nursery jingles of her childhood, should have supplied the rhymed copy for it; but whether or not her name determined the title *Mother Goose* would always appear to be a moot question. Many persons scout the idea that Thomas Fleet ever published a book of this description at all. Prideaux, the English scholar, who was very much interested in the origin of Mother Goose, wrote to the late Professor Francis James Child of Harvard University, asking him if in his researches he had come upon any facts that would throw light upon the subject. To this Professor Child replied that a copy of an early Boston edition published in 1719 by Thomas Fleet of Pudding Lane *was said* to have been discovered in an antiquarian library and that he had meant to reprint it. The book in the antiquarian library—the American Antiquarian Library at Worcester, Massachusetts—disappeared. It may have been lost in transit or misplaced. No sooner was it lost, however, than doubts concerning it arose, and certain persons came to the conclusion that it had never existed and that the book to which

Professor Child had reference must have been of a later date, a copy, in fact, of the Thomas edition published at Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1785, or of the Munroe and Francis edition, which was still well known and fairly common. Professor Child was a sound scholar; but he may have been mistaken in this matter, more especially as his knowledge of the reputed Fleet edition seems to have been obtained at second hand. The question, however, is one that cannot be decided until a copy of the 1719 edition comes to light or some contemporary reference to it is unearthed. Personally, I do not believe such a book was ever published.

America, at any rate, may take some pride in her contribution to the fame of Mother Goose. The name originated in France and was filched by Newberry; but it is America that has preserved the name as applied to the nursery poet, not because of the disputed Boston edition of 1719, but largely because the early editions of Munroe and Francis used the name and so established it for all time in this country. The name, in fact, may be said to belong to us. Neither Halliwell nor Lang nor other English editors and students retained it; in England, it is not popular at all.

So much for the name; now for the verses. Most of the nursery jingles that we call Mother Goose melodies came from England. The first collection of which there is any record was Newberry's, but Newberry was not the author, and Oliver Goldsmith, although he may have edited the work and altered and improved some of the jingles, was not the author. As a matter of fact, these nursery jingles are not the product of any one person. They go back to a day when there was no established poetic mint, when any one could manufacture gold and silver coins and "pass them current, too"—providing they were made of sterling metal. The

Mother Goose rhymes are popular poetry, that is, poetry of the people. They originated with the people and were handed down by them. No professional poet, no literary artist seems to have had a hand in the making of them. Let us take a specific example, to illustrate their creation. *Old King Cole* will serve our purpose.

King Cole was a legendary king of England. He is supposed to have reigned in the third century A. D. Robert of Gloucester and Geoffrey of Monmouth both speak of this merry monarch of merry England. The earliest version of the nursery rhyme, *Old King Cole*, that has been preserved belongs to the seventeenth century. It is as follows:

Good King Cole
He called for his bowl
And he called for fiddlers three;
And then was fiddle fiddle
And twice fiddle fiddle,
For 'twas my lady's birthday;
And therefore we keep holiday
And come to be merry.

Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote his *British History* in the twelfth century. Robert of Gloucester wrote his *Chronicle* in the thirteenth century. The latter was in verse, but in the halting, unrhythmic verse of the period, as different from the tripping, rhythmic verses of Mother Goose as the uncertain steps of a blind man are from the marked and rapid measure of a country dance. From the time of Robert and Geoffrey to the seventeenth century, so far as we know, there is no reference to King Cole in print. What became of him in the meanwhile?

Is it not unthinkable that some scholar, delving into these "chronicles of wasted time," should have had the impulse—

or the ability—to strike off a musical jingle based on Geoffrey's or Robert's account of King Cole? It is precisely what a scholar would not do. And is it not just as unthinkable that some light-hearted jingler would have turned for inspiration to the stilted old narratives of the two historians? It is precisely what a jingler would not do. Surely the only reasonable view is that King Cole, whether real or legendary, lived in the oral traditions of the people of England from the third century till the twelfth and the thirteenth; that the two chroniclers, who, as we know, were keen to collect all the bits of the driftwood of tradition that had floated down the scanty stream of history, built a little historical house for him to inhabit; and that either before or after the twelfth or the thirteenth century some jingle-maker had sung half a dozen lines about the merry old king and his fiddlers, basing his verse on the tradition.

It is most likely that the rhyme was in existence at the time when the histories were written and that the histories borrowed from the rhyme, rather than the rhyme from the histories—either that, or both were based on the tradition. Geoffrey says, for example, that the daughter of King Cole was a musician. Perhaps this belief was traditional down to the twelfth century; perhaps Geoffrey considered that if King Cole liked music—and the fiddling is proof of that—his daughter would naturally be musical also, and gravely recorded the assumption in his history. However that may be, King Cole, the legendary king of England, remained buried in the solemn tome-tombs of Geoffrey and Robert until exhumed by modern scholars, while Old King Cole, the jovial monarch, lived on in the elysium of the popular jingle, and enjoyed his music, his pipe (which must have

been added to his joys after the discovery of America) and his potations—"double-lived in regions new."

Such, I believe, is the history of the nursery rhyme, *Old King Cole*. And such is the history of many of the other nursery rhymes. A clever wag with a taste for jingles gets off a bit of doggerel on some current theme or contemporary person or unusual situation. It is barbed with the nonsense and the rhythm that carries it true and far and sends it deep into the memory. That is, the initial verse is the spontaneous creation of some one with wit and with power to jingle off his nonsense,—in other words, a folk-artist. The jingle is repeated from one generation to another, and when those who know it move to other parts of the country they carry the jingle with them. As time goes on, the jingle is altered and improved; the crudities in the first version are refined away, the rhythm becomes more accurate: in short, the passage of time wears the stone round and smooth and shapely. Meanwhile, the inferior jingles are lost. Time, the great winnower, blows away the chaff. In the course of years, it may be, the significance of the original idea even is lost, and the jingle becomes a mere combination of pleasant sounds and sprightly movement, remembered and treasured solely because of its sound.

And all this took place before the jingle was committed to print! Perhaps Oliver Goldsmith did have a hand in the final shaping of some of the Mother Goose poems, but if he did it was as an editor, not as a creator. The Mother Goose jingles are most certainly popular in their origin, and were, for the most part, transmitted orally until about the middle of the eighteenth century.

Of course, not all the Mother Goose jingles are historical. Some of them are metrical riddles; some are motion and

gesture songs; some are bits of popular ballads; some are counting-out jingles; some are proverbs; some are mere devices to aid children to learn their a b c's, their numbers, the names of the months, and so forth; and some are parodies or satires concealed under the mask of sheer nonsense. Whatever the occasion or the cause that called them into being, they have lived by the mere virtue of their fun and sound, they have been repeated because the repetition of them gives pleasure alike to the speaker and to the listener.

As I have said, they were, for the most part, transmitted orally until about the middle of the eighteenth century. But we catch glimpses of some of them in the books of the seventeenth century or even earlier. For example, in Thomas Preston's play, *Cambyzes*, which was licensed in 1569, we find these words:

They be at hand Sir with stick and fiddle;
They can play a new daunce called Hey-diddle-didle.

These lines may be taken as evidence that some version of our *Hey diddle diddle* was in existence at that time. In Beaumont and Fletcher's *Bonduca*, written before 1619, one of the characters is asked to "sing a song of sixpence." In the *Book of Merry Riddles* (1629) there is a jingle beginning *Little Boy Bunting*, which certainly suggests our *Bye, Baby Bunting* (the word *bunting* being an old term of endearment). The stanza, *Thirty days hath September, April, June, and November, etc.*, is as old as 1570, being found in Grafton's *Chronicle*. According to Halliwell, *Three Blind Mice* is to be found in a song book printed in 1609. There are dozens of allusions to the nursery songs, dozens of fragments of them scattered throughout the books of this period. These allusions and fragments go to show

that the jingles are very old and were popular as far back as we have any knowledge of them. Undoubtedly they ran along in the underground stream of oral and traditional song, now and then rising to the surface. In my own childhood I heard many nursery jingles that have never appeared in any collection—that is, so far as I know, and I have made diligent search. We children did not make them up; apparently they had been handed down orally for a long, long time.

There is strong probability that not a few nursery rhymes were built up by accretion. Some one improvised a jingle on a certain subject; some one else added a stanza, and some one else added another, and so on, until it became a fairly long poem. *Mother Hubbard* looks like that kind of creation; so does *London Bridge*; so does *Gay go up and gay go down*. Students of the popular ballad put forward this theory of creation by accretion; I believe it may be as reasonably applied to nursery jingles, which are essentially popular. This theory accounts for so many jingles beginning *Little Tommy Tucker*, *Little Jack Horner*, and so forth. Of course, in the case of these jingles we have separate poems; but imitation has plainly been at work.

Some of the ditties seem to have originated in little scenes and incidents of child life. Perhaps some mother, while rocking her baby to sleep, saw a mouse run up the tall clock and scamper down again when frightened by the striking of the bell, and immediately wove the incident into a nonsense jingle. Another mother may have made up a little rhyme about her child because he was so sleepy he wouldn't wait to get his shoes and stockings off before he tumbled into bed; and we have *Diddle, diddle, dumpling, my son John*. This is pure conjecture; we have no evidence that either of these rhymes was so composed. But we do know that jingles are

often created in just that fashion—on the spur of the moment, to fit some sudden need. Some time ago, I was present when a jingle was made in this manner. Two boys who had been playing together had a quarrel, and one of them started home. As he marched off, the other yelled after him in derision:

There he goes down the road
Like a great big toad.

Not a good jingle, but it illustrates my point. I feel sure that some of the Mother Goose jingles originated in this way. No doubt they were altered and improved as they were transmitted, but the improvement was not made by professional literary artists; it was made by folk-artists. And that statement we can make general; the Mother Goose jingles were composed by the people—not written down, not studied, not elaborated. They were spontaneous utterances of such excellence that they remained in the memory of the people and were transmitted from generation to generation by word of mouth.

Does any one doubt that oral tradition was able to preserve and transmit the Mother Goose verses through the long period of two or three hundred years? Let him but remember that folk tales and fairy stories lived orally for centuries before the Grimms and Jacobs and Langs gathered them into books. Let him but remember that the popular ballads of England and Scotland were transmitted orally from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to the time of Percy, in the eighteenth century. Or let him but study the history of such singing games as *King William was King James's son*, or *London Bridge is falling down*, or observe how the boys of today use in their games certain terms and phrases

that are hundreds of years old—terms that have never found their way into books, not even into any but the most recent dictionaries. Oral tradition has been the amber in which nearly all of the folk lore, folk games, and folk literature we now possess has been preserved. It is only within the last hundred years or so that it has been displaced by print. In olden days, there was no surer way to transmit an idea or an emotion down the ages than to commit it to the tenacious memory of the common people, provided that the idea or emotion originated among the common people and was expressed in verse, song, proverb, or other striking form.

The Mother Goose jingles, then, are genuine products of the people of the past. And they suggest the past, the childish, unlettered, unsophisticated past, the past with its broad farcical fun, its delight in alliteration, assonance, and rapid rhythms. That period has long gone by; we are now too literary, too refined and too artificial to blow the beautiful rainbow bubbles. We elders are becoming too grown-up to enjoy nursery jingles; our ears have become dulled to their pleasant sounds, our practical outlook on life has made them seem trivial and barren. But each generation of children, recognizing the close affinity between their desires and emotions and these creations of an earlier and more childish era, turn a deaf ear and listless eye toward manufactured literary wares and with their strange faculty of appropriating what they want, revert to the gay, nonsensical jingles of the immortal Mother Goose.

What is the secret of the old lady's charm? It seems cruel to pin the butterfly jingles down and subject them to scientific examination; yet that is what we must do, if we are to analyze them thoroughly. Why do children like these verses?

First. Children like them because the subject matter is interesting to them. They are dramatic, and children love dramatic action. Many of them tell, or suggest, brief stories. Many of them contain character sketches of children and of childlike men and women. Some of them introduce animals as actors. Some put forward riddles, and riddles are always fascinating to children—for a time at least. They are full of action and picturesque scenes and suggestive language. The Mother Goose world is preëminently a childish world, a world of grotesque and singular objects, scenes, and persons.

Second. Children like them because they are rhythmical, and the rhythm is quantitative. Now, quantitative rhythm has two characteristics: first, the beats, or accents, are strictly regular, as regular as the ticking of a clock or the beating of a drum; and second, the number of accented syllables in a metrical foot is immaterial, provided the accented syllables occur at exactly regular intervals of time. To illustrate—

*I saw an old wom-an tossed up in a bas-ket,
Nine-teen times as high as the moon.*

Keep time to this as you read, accenting the italicized syllables, and you will observe that the time is as marked as that of a metronome, although the number of syllables in the line varies from eight to twelve and the number of syllables in the foot varies from one (first foot of second line) to four (last foot of first line).

This regularity of metrical accent must be maintained even at the expense of the logical emphasis. Let us read this:

*Pease porridge hot, pease porridge cold,
Pease porridge in the pot, nine days old.*

We must emphasize *in*, although it is not a significant word, and must ignore *pot*, which is important both in meaning and as a rhyme to *hot*. In short, Mother Goose is never well read unless read with strongly marked and unfailingly regular accents. Elisions, rapid utterance of unaccented syllables, and pauses must be depended upon to make the tempo regular.

Mother Goose employs various devices to stress her accents. Chief among these are alliteration and rhyme.

Sing a song of six-pence.

Here, for example, the alliteration in *sing* and *six* serves to throw additional stress upon these syllables. The function of rhyme is, perhaps, not primarily to emphasize the accent; but this it does in Mother Goose because the rhymes are so close together. If the lines are short, end-rhyme only is used; if long, internal rhyme is ordinarily employed. The recurrence of the combination *ill* in the line, *Jack and Jill went up the hill*, assuredly reinforces the accent.

Undoubtedly, then, one of the most decided characteristics of the Mother Goose jingles is the unbroken regularity of strongly marked accents. Children like that. The feeling for time seems to be the fundamental musical feeling; it seems to have developed first in all the early races and to develop first in children. And the primary demand is for absolutely regular time. Later, if the sense of rhythm is developed, the ear takes pleasure in ritards and accelerandos, in holds and rests, in the various devices in music and poetry to vary the meter to conform to the particular idea or emotion expressed. But children care most for that verse which is marked by the uninterrupted, never varying recurrence of strongly stressed syllables.

This regularity of strongly struck beats does not entirely account for the wonderful jingling music of the Mother Goose verses. Pope's verses are regular.

Be not the first by whom the new is tried,
Nor yet the last to lay the old aside.

That is regular enough. But it has no jingle. It doesn't trip, doesn't skip and skim along, doesn't set you to beating time with your feet. Something more is necessary if we are to have a sprightly, staccato, rapid-moving jingle. And something more is found in Mother Goose.

Perhaps the largest factor in the production of the jingling so noticeable in Mother Goose is the multiplicity of unaccented syllables. If you pronounce four syllables in the same length of time in which you pronounce two (as you do in *I saw an old woman*, and in scores of Mother Goose melodies), you must inevitably utter the four syllables twice as rapidly as you do the two. Almost every Mother Goose poem furnishes instances of this rapid utterance of unaccented syllables preceding the regular and decided stroke of the accent. It is like the preliminary tapping of the hammer on the anvil before the smith strikes the iron. It is like the clatter and buzz and roll of the snare drum filling in the pauses between the steady and strong strokes of the bass drum. This never failing but ever varying tinkling and tripping of the unaccented syllables that accompanies the monotonously regular return of the accent is, perhaps, the most important factor in the jingling effect so characteristic of the Mother Goose verses.

But it is not the only factor. Many of the verses are trochaic in movement, that is, the lines start off with the accent on the first syllable. This tends to give a pronounced swing

to the movement. The short lines; the numerous repetitions, found in dozens of the jingles and the basis of such jingles as *There was a Crooked Man*, and *The Old Woman and the Sixpence*; the frequent recurrence of the rhyming sounds, caused both by the short lines and the internal rhymes; the plentiful use of feminine, or double rhymes (*Muffet—tuffet; spider—side her; Horner—corner*; rhymes in which the stress falls on some syllable before the last)—all this makes the jingling more pronounced.

Moreover, the alliteration, which, as we have seen, emphasizes the accent, often produces a crisp, tinkling effect. This, of course, depends upon the sound alliterated. For example, take the following stanza:

Sing a song of sixpence,
Pockets full of rye;
Four and twenty blackbirds
Baked into a pie.

The explosive *p*'s and *b*'s give liveliness and vivacity to the verse, making it staccato as well as marcato. Sometimes the alliteration combines with assonance to create a distinctly onomatopœic effect. In the line "One misty, moisty morning," for example, the *m*'s and *sty*'s, when dwelt upon and drawn out, suggest by their very sound the dull, drab landscape. In *Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, baker's man*, the *p*'s, *k*'s, and *b*, in connection with the dactyllic movement, suggest briskness, while the succession of *a*'s reflects the gay mood of the poem. There is no need to multiply instances; almost every popular Mother Goose jingle contains examples of pleasing combinations of vowels and consonants.

Mother Goose often coins new words. Most of them are nonsensical and most of them are jingly, alliterative, and

onomatopœic. *Humpty-dumpty; Hey diddle diddle; Diddle, diddle, dumpling; Hickery, dickery, dock; Hickety-pickety; Handy-spandy, Jack-a-dandy*—these are a few specimens of the many comical words and phrases. Sometimes the poem has a string of nonsense for a refrain, such as *Rowley, powley, gammon and spinach*, or *Fol de riddle, lol de riddle, hi dank do*. Sometimes the poem seems to exist for the mere sake of the nonsensical jingle, as witness the following:

I had four brothers over the sea,
Perrie, merrie, dixie, domine;
And they sent each a present to me,
Petrum, patrum, paradise, temporie,
Perrie, merrie, dixie, domine.

Sometimes, especially in the counting-out jingles, the poem is metrical nonsense pure and simple.

All in all, the best Mother Goose verses are the best jingles ever written—or made, rather, for we may be sure that most of them were not written down until they had been spoken, recited, jingled by thousands of people. And I suspect that it is the jingle element in the verses that has been most influential in preserving them for so many years. Nothing is so easily learned as a jingle; nothing is so likely to be recited over and over again.

Third. Children like these verses because they are full of humor—humor of the nonsense variety. And the nonsense word or phrase is not the only element in this humor. The content itself is often comical. The funny characteristics, scrapes, and misadventures of children and grown-ups—Jack and Jill and their famous tumble; Miss Muffett and her cowardice; Jack Horner and his greed; My Son John and his strange propensity for going to bed with one shoe off and

one shoe on; Simple Simon and his encounter with the pie-man; The Little Man and his gun—all these and dozens of others, with their whimsical ways and surprising escapades furnish the good, broad, slapdash fun that children love. Crude? Perhaps. Obvious? Yes. But it is the kind of fun that children like. It is full of dramatic action, full of pictures, full of the absurd, the ludicrous, the ridiculous.

In many of the jingles, the humor is furnished by the surprise. It is the unexpected incongruity that amuses the child in the story of the Man in the Moon who burned his mouth on cold pease-porridge, the same unexpectedness which appears in the story of the Man in Our Town who scratched out his eyes and then scratched them in, and in the story of the Man who ran *fourteen* miles in *fifteen* days.

Other jingles are amusing because of the solemn air with which a trivial fact is stated.

There was an old woman
Lived under a hill;
And if she's not gone,
She lives there still.

Akin to these is the jingle that begins to tell a story and then suddenly changes its mind and ends with a jolt.

I'll tell you a story
About Jack-a-nory,
And now my story's begun.
I'll tell you another
About Jack and his brother,
And now my story's done.

Still others are humorous in their presentation of absurd,

upside-down, topsy-turvy pictures. *Hey diddle diddle, the cat and the fiddle* belongs to this group. Here is another:

A cat came fiddling out of a barn,
With a pair of bagpipes under her arm;
She could sing nothing but fiddle cum fee,
The mouse has married the bumble bee.

The humor in Mother Goose is at its best when the jingles are read aloud. The funny onomatopœic words, the musical lilt and tilt of the rhythm, the wild orgy of sounds gone crazy with joy, the spluttering and crackling and sizzling, the popping and hopping, the dashing and crashing and splashing—therein lies the genuine fun of Mother Goose. Sometimes I think there is no more laughable medley of sounds in all the world than *Hickety, pickety, my black hen*, unless it be *Heetum peetum, penny pie*, or *Diddledy, diddledy, dum-tee, the mouse ran up the plum tree*.

Comical, surprising, grotesque ideas set to a rhythm that swings you along in a whirl and swirl of pleasant excitement, a strain of gay, tinkling banjo notes—that is Mother Goose. It makes me think of popcorn popping over a wood fire in an old-fashioned fireplace, surrounded by a group of laughing, singing children.

Fourth. Children like the Mother Goose jingles because they are stimulating to the imagination. Most of them are brief, so brief that they merely sketch a character or suggest a story. They leave the details to the imagination of the reader; the curiosity of children being proverbial, a hint, a random remark, or a riddle is sufficient to set the child's mind revolving. Then does he create a planet out of wandering fragments of star-dust. Nor does it matter to him if his planet is lopsided and moves in an eccentric orbit, so

long as it is peopled with charming Lilliputians and Brob-dignagians, with fiddling cats and laughing dogs. It is his own star and he would not have it different. Children have an innate belief in the marvelous and the supernatural. In *The Old Woman in the Basket*, *The Pig that Flew up in the Air*, and scores of other jingles, Mother Goose gives him material for wonder—fresh star-dust. Think of the stimulus to a child's imagination in such verses as the following:

I had a little nut tree; nothing would it bear
But a silver nutmeg and a golden pear;
The king of Spain's daughter came to visit me,
And all was because of my little nut tree.
I skipped over water, I danced over sea,
And all the birds in the air couldn't catch me.

Even when the incidents are not of a supernatural type, they are often so extraordinary as to give a fillip to the child's imagination. When I was a small boy, I never tired of trying to visualize *Goosey, Goosey, Gander*. I wanted to know if it was a real goose that was wandering about the house; I wondered why the old man would not say his prayers; I was curious to find out why one should take him by the left leg and throw him down the stairs. It was all so puzzling that I was moved to utter something like Mr. Tulliver's complaint: "Things have got so twisted round and wrapped up in unreasonable words. Everything winds about so. The more straightforward you are, the more you're puzzled." No doubt this kind of puzzling is good for children, because it sets their wits to work to seek a solution. As for me, I was not puzzled, as I remember, by the points that etymologists and folk-lorists worry over. I was not curious, for instance, about the "tuffet" that Miss Muffet sat upon.

Nor do I believe that other children are. Not long ago, I tried to pose a little girl acquaintance by asking her what a tuffet is. "Something to sit on," she answered with withering brevity and went serenely on to her really important concerns.

The orthodox riddles, such as *Humpty-dumpty*, *Thirty White Horses*, *Little Nanny Etticoat*, and the like, have a very satisfactory intellectual content for children. They usually take little pleasure in guessing at the riddle, and soon give it up. But when they learn the answer and the light breaks upon them, when they perceive the cleverness of the puzzle and the aptness of the allegory—ah, that is a moment of rare intellectual joy! At once they must catch some one else, they must have the pleasure of telling the answer and feeling superior. Fine toys, riddles. But alas! the joy is fleeting, the toy soon broken; and the child comes back to his *Goosey, Goosey, Gander*, and its infinite variety of pictures, scenes, and personages, shadowy, half-understood, tantalizing. Therein lies the true intellectual content of Mother Goose: in her appeal to the imagination.

"But does Mother Goose teach anything? That's what I want to know," says the utilitarian. "Does it teach children any facts? Does it teach them any morals and manners?" Why, no. It is the teachers that must teach them facts and figures and that must try to teach them manners and morals. Let the carpenter stick to his rule and the cobbler to his last. Mother Goose is lamentably weak in history. Her ideas are not scientific; she would have us believe that dogs play the flute. Facts are not her strong point. But then—any one can teach facts. To develop the sense of rhythm, to provoke "mirth that after no repenting draws," to stimulate the imagination and provide food

for fancy and emotion—that is difficult. It needs to be done; and Mother Goose does it supremely well. And what if the profit were no more than pleasure? Pleasure is profit. He was one of Shakespeare's wisest fools that said, "Pleasure will be paid one time or another."

If the teacher must reckon the value of Mother Goose in educational dollars and cents, if she must reduce the jingles to terms of practicality, let her be satisfied with the aid that Mother Goose renders to the beginner in reading. So far as I can see, there is no reason why the rhymes should not be used to familiarize children with print. A child who knows *Little Boy Blue* orally, learns to read the jingle easily and eagerly. He is following the natural route from the known to the related unknown and he is having some fun on the journey. And the vocabulary of most of the jingles is precisely the vocabulary that the little novice in reading should acquire. It is made up of everyday, colloquial words. It contains names, both of animals and of persons, specific adjectives, and active verbs; and it was not composed on the silly theory that long words are necessarily harder for children to learn.

No, there is no good reason why these childish poems should not be used to teach reading. But any employment of them that takes the mystery and magic out of them and reduces them to the commonplace—let us have none of that. Too much or too complex a dramatization tends to do this very thing. Of course, since dramatization furnishes educative pleasure, it seems a pity not to use it to a certain extent. This much must be said, however: the child should first learn the jingles orally. From the age of two or three up to the age of five or six he should hear the verses, know them, repeat them, and love them as oral poetry. After that,

he may have his suggestive illustrated editions and engage with moderation in the game of dramatization. We cannot be too often reminded that these poems are essentially oral. The child that becomes acquainted with them through the medium of print, or who has his imagination forestalled by a dramatization, or his hunger for the marvelous prematurely satisfied by illustrations, will never realize the full and perfect pleasure of Mother Goose.

Let me in conclusion, suggest some good editions.

Perhaps the best cheap edition, *Mother Goose: A Book of Nursery Rhymes*, D. C. Heath and Company, Boston. The collection was made by the late Charles Welsh, the scholar herein referred to, and contains a brief introduction by him.

The Only True Mother Goose Melodies, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston. An exact reproduction of the Boston edition of 1834.

Mother Goose's Melodies for Children, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston. A good collection. It contains some jingles not often found and some which a stricter classification might have excluded as not belonging properly to Mother Goose. The editor, Mr. William A. Wheeler, gives the arguments for the Fleet edition as they were understood by him at the time of publication.

Mr. George Saintsbury's collection, *National Rhymes of the Nursery*, Frederick A. Stokes and Company, New York. An interesting edition. It is well illustrated by Gordon Browne.

The Nursery Rhyme Book, Frederick Warne and Company, New York. Verses collected by Andrew Lang and illustrated by Leslie Brooke. One of the best editions I

have seen. The introduction discusses the historical origins of some of the jingles.

Copies of James O. Halliwell's *The Nursery Rhymes of England* may still be found. This collection is invaluable.

Various artists of note, besides those mentioned above, have tried their hand at illustrating Mother Goose. The Kate Greenaway Mother Goose is one of the classics of children's literature. It has lately been reprinted by Frederick Warne and Company. The Century Company's edition of 1913 is beautifully illustrated by Arthur Rackham. The most interesting illustrations ever assembled to illustrate Mother Goose were brought together for the edition that was published at Boston in 1833 and was reprinted by Lee and Shepard in 1905 with an introduction by the Reverend Edward Everett Hale.

SELECTIONS FROM MOTHER GOOSE'S MELODIES

Little boy blue, come blow up your horn,
The sheep's in the meadow, the cow's in the corn;
Where's the little boy that tends the sheep?
He's under the hay-cock, fast asleep.
Go wake him, go wake him. O! no, not I:
For if I do, he'll be sure to cry.

Hark, hark, the dogs do bark,
The beggars have come to town.
Some in rags, and some in tags,
And some in velvet gowns.

Sing a song of sixpence,
A pocket full of rye;
Four and twenty blackbirds
Baked into a pie;

When the pie was opened,
The birds began to sing;
Was not that a dainty dish
To set before the king?

The king was in the parlor,
Counting out his money;
The queen was in the kitchen,
Eating bread and honey;

The maid was in the garden,
Hanging out the clothes;
There came a little blackbird,
And snapped off her nose.

Jenny was so mad,
She didn't know what to do;
She put her finger in her ear,
And cracked it right in two.

Jack and Jill went up the hill,
To fetch a pail of water;
Jack fell down, and broke his crown,
And Jill came tumbling after.

Then up Jack got, and home did trot,
As fast as he could caper,
And went to bed to mend his head,
With vinegar and brown paper.

Goosey, goosey, gander,
Whither do you wander?
Upstairs and downstairs,
In my lady's chamber,

There I met an old man
Who wouldn't say his prayers;
I took him by the left leg,
And threw him down the stairs.

Lavender blue, and rosemary green,
When I am king, you shall be queen,
Call up my maids at four of the clock,
Some to the wheel, and some to the rock,
Some to make hay, and some to shell corn.
And you and I will keep the bed warm.

A was an apple-pie;
B bit it;
C cut it;
D dealt it;
E eat it;
F fought for it;
G got it;
H had it;
J joined it;
K kept it;
L longed for it;
M mourned for it;

N nodded at it;
O opened it;
P peeped in it;
Q quartered it;
R ran for it;
S stole it;
T took it;
V viewed it;
W wanted it;
X, Y, Z, and ampersand,
All wished for a piece in hand.

Baa, baa, black sheep,
Have you any wool?
Yes, sir; yes, sir;
Three bags full;
One for my master,
One for my dame,
And one for the little boy
Who lives in the lane.

Cock a doodle doo!
My dame has lost her shoe;
My master's lost his fiddling-stick,
And don't know what to do.

Cock a doodle doo!
What is my dame to do?
Till master finds his fiddling-stick,
She'll dance without her shoe.

Cock a doodle doo!
My dame has lost her shoe,
And master's found his fiddling-stick.
Sing doodle doodle doo!

Cock a doodle doo!
My dame will dance with you,
While master fiddles his fiddling-stick,
For dame and doodle doo.

Cock a doodle doo!
Dame has lost her shoe;
Gone to bed and scratched her head,
And can't tell what to do.

Gay go up and gay go down,
To ring the bells of London town.

Bull's eyes and targets,
Say the bells of St. Margaret's.

Brickbats and tiles,
Say the bells of St. Giles'.

Half-pence and farthings,
Say the bells of St. Martin's.

Oranges and lemons,
Say the bells of St. Clement's.

Pancakes and fritters,
Say the bells of St. Peter's.

Two sticks and an apple,
Say the bells of Whitechapel.

Old Father Baldpate,
Say the slow bells at Aldgate.

Pokers and tongs,
Say the bells at St. John's.

Kettles and pans,
Say the bells at St. Ann's.

You owe me ten shillings,
Say the bells at St. Helen's.

When will you pay me?
Say the bells at Old Bailey.

When I grow rich,
Say the bells at Shoreditch.

Pray, when will that be?
Say the bells of Stepney.

I'm sure I don't know,
Says the great bell at Bow.

Here comes a candle to light you to bed,
And here comes a chopper to chop off your head.

One, two,
Buckle my shoe;
Three, four,
Shut the door;
Five, six,
Pick up sticks;
Seven, eight,
Lay them straight;
Nine, ten,
A good fat hen;
Eleven, twelve,
Who will delve?
Thirteen, fourteen,
Maids a-courting;
Fifteen, sixteen,
Maids a-kissing;
Seventeen, eighteen,
Maids a-waiting;
Nineteen, twenty,
My stomach's empty.

Higgledy piggledy,
Here we lie,
Picked and plucked,
And put in a pie.

My first is snapping, snarling, growling,
My second's industrious, romping, and prowling.

Old Mother Hubbard
Went to the cupboard,
To get her poor dog a bone;
But when she came there,
The cupboard was bare,
And so the poor dog had none.

She went to the baker's
To buy him some bread;
But when she came back,
The poor dog was dead.

She went to the joiner's
To buy him a coffin;
But when she came back,
The poor dog was laughing.

She took a clean dish
To get him some tripe;
But when she came back,
He was smoking his pipe.

She went to the fishmonger's
To buy him some fish;
And when she came back,
He was licking the dish.

She went to the alehouse
To get him some beer;
But when she came back,
The dog sat in a chair.

She went to the tavern
For white wine and red;
But when she came back,
The dog stood on his head.

She went to the hatter's
To buy him a hat;
But when she came back,
He was feeding the cat.

She went to the barber's
To buy him a wig;
But when she came back,
He was dancing a jig.

She went to the fruiterer's
To buy him some fruit;
But when she came back,
He was playing the flute.

She went to the tailor's
To buy him a coat;
But when she came back,
He was riding a goat.

She went to the cobbler's
To buy him some shoes;
But when she came back,
He was reading the news.

She went to the seamstress
To buy him some linen;
But when she came back,
The dog was spinning.

She went to the hosier's
To buy him some hose;
But when she came back,
He was dressed in his clothes.

The dame made a curtsy,
The dog made a bow;
The dame said, "Your servant,"
The dog said, "Bow, wow."

Once in my\life I married a wife,
And where do you think I found her?
On Gretna Green, in a velvet sheen,
And I took up a stick to pound her.
She jumped over a barberry-bush,
And I jumped over a timber;
I showed her a gay gold ring,
And she showed me her finger.

Little Dicky Dilver
Had a wife of silver;
He took a stick and broke her back,
And threw her in the river.
Fine stockings, fine shoes,
Fine yellow hair,
Double ruffle around her neck
And not a dress to wear.

Jack in the pulpit, out and in;
Sold his wife for a minikin pin.

Intery, mintery, cutery-corn,
Apple seed and apple thorn;
Wire, brier, limber-lock,
Five geese in a flock,
Sit and sing by a spring,
O-u-t, and in again.

Little Bo-peep has lost her sheep,
And can't tell where to find them;
Leave them alone and they'll come home,
And bring their tails behind them.

Little Bo-peep fell fast asleep,
And dreamt she heard them bleating;
But when she awoke, she found it a joke,
For they were still a-fleeting.

Then up she took her little crook,
Determined for to find them;

She found them indeed, but it made her heart bleed,
For they'd left all their tails behind 'em.

Ride a cock-horse to Banbury-cross,
To see what Tommy can buy;
A penny white loaf,
A penny white cake,
And a two-penny apple-pie.

To market ride the gentlemen,
So do we, so do we;
Then comes the country clown,
Hobbledy gee, hobbledy gee;
First go the ladies, nim, nim, nim;
Next come the gentlemen, trim, trim, trim;
Then come the country clowns, gallop-a-trot.

Here goes my lord
A trot, a trot, a trot, a trot;
Here goes my lady
A canter, a canter, a canter, a canter!
Here goes my young master
Jockey-hitch, jockey-hitch, jockey-hitch, jockey-hitch;
Here goes my young miss,
An amble, an amble, an amble, an amble!
The footman lags behind to tippie ale and wine,
And goes gallop, a gallop, a gallop, to make up his time.

A duck and a drake,
A nice barley-cake,
With a penny to pay the old baker;
A hop and a scotch
Is another notch,
Slitherum, slatherum, take her.

Handy Spandy, Jack-a-dandy,
Loved plum cake and sugar candy;
He bought some at a grocer's shop,
And out he came, hop, hop, hop.

Hickery dickery, six and seven,
Alabone, crackabone, ten and eleven;
Spin, span, muskidun;
Twiddle 'um, twaddle 'um, twenty-one.

There was an owl lived in an oak.
Wisky, wasky, weedle;
And every word he ever spoke,
Was fiddle, faddle, feedle.

A gunner chanced to come that way,
Wisky, wasky, weedle;
Says he, "I'll shoot you, silly bird!"
Fiddle, faddle, feedle.

When I was a bachelor, I lived by myself,
And all the bread and cheese I had I put upon the shelf;
The rats and the mice, they led me such a life,
I had to go to London to get myself a wife.

The streets were so broad, and the lanes were so narrow,
I had to bring her home in an old wheelbarrow;
The wheelbarrow broke, and my wife got a fall,
And down came wheelbarrow, little wife, and all.

Snail, snail, come out of your hole,
Or else I will beat you as black as a coal.

There were two blackbirds,
Sitting on a hill,
The one named Jack,
The other named Jill;
Fly away, Jack!
Fly away, Jill!
Come again, Jack!
Come again, Jill!

There was an old woman who lived in a shoe,
She had so many children she didn't know what to do.

She gave them some broth without any bread;
She whipped them all soundly, and put them to bed.

Taffy was a Welshman, Taffy was a thief;
Taffy came to my house and stole a piece of beef:

I went to Taffy's house, Taffy wasn't home;
Taffy came to my house and stole a marrow-bone.

I went to Taffy's house, Taffy was in bed,
I took the marrow-bone and beat about his head.

There was a crooked man, and he went a crooked mile.
He found a crooked sixpence against a crooked stile:
He bought a crooked cat, which caught a crooked mouse,
And they all lived together in a little crooked house.

Pussy-cat, pussy-cat, where have you been?
"I've been to London to look at the queen."
Pussy-cat, pussy-cat, what did you there?
"I frightened a little mouse under the chair."

Simple Simon met a pieman
Going to the fair;
Says Simple Simon to the pieman,
"Let me taste your ware."

Says the pieman to Simple Simon,
"Show me first your penny";
Says Simple Simon to the pieman,
"Indeed I have not any."

Simple Simon went a-fishing
For to catch a whale;
All the water he had got
Was in his mother's pail.

Simple Simon went to look
If plums grew on a thistle;
He pricked his fingers very much,
Which made poor Simon whistle.

The Children's Poets

Mary, Mary, quite contrary,
How does your garden grow?
With silver bells, and cockle-shells,
And pretty maids all in a row.

Jack be nimble,
Jack be quick;
And Jack jump over
The candlestick.

Needles and pins, needles and pins,
When a man marries, his trouble begins.

As I was going to St. Ives,
I met a man with seven wives,
Each wife had seven sacks,
Each sack had seven cats,
Each cat had seven kits:
Kits, cats, sacks, and wives,
How many were going to St. Ives?

Tom he was a piper's son,
He learned to play when he was young;
But all the tune that he could play,
Was, "Over the hills and far away!"
Over the hills, and a great way off,
And the wind will blow my top-knot off.

Now Tom with his pipe made such a noise,
That he pleased both the girls and the boys;
And they all stopped to hear him play,
"Over the hills and far away!"

Now Tom with his pipe did play with such skill,
That those who heard him could never keep still;
Whenever they heard they began for to dance,
Even pigs on their hind legs would after him prance.

As Dolly was milking her cow one day,
Tom took out his pipe and began for to play;
So Doll and the cow danced "The Cheshire Round,"
Till the pail was broke, and the milk ran on the ground.

He met old Dame Trot with a basket of eggs,
He used his pipe and she used her legs;
She danced about till the eggs were all broke,
She began for to fret, but he laughed at the joke.

He saw a cross fellow was beating an ass,
Heavy laden with pots, pans, dishes, and glass;
He took out his pipe and played them a tune,
And the jackass's load was lightened full soon.

There was an old woman
Sold puddings and pies,
She went to the mill
And dust flew in her eyes.
While through the streets,
To all she meets,
She always cries,
"Hot Pies—Hot Pies!"

If you sneeze on Monday, you sneeze for danger;
Sneeze on a Tuesday, kiss a stranger;
Sneeze on a Wednesday, sneeze for a letter;
Sneeze on a Thursday, something better;
Sneeze on a Friday, sneeze for sorrow;
Sneeze on a Saturday, see your sweetheart tomorrow.

1. I went up one pair of stairs.
2. Just like me.
1. I went up two pair of stairs.
2. Just like me.
1. I went into a room.
2. Just like me.

1. I looked out of a window.
 2. Just like me.
 1. And there I saw a monkey.
 2. Just like me.
-

One to make ready,
And two to prepare;
Good luck to the rider,
And away goes the mare.

Rompty-iddity, row, row, row,
If I had a good supper, I could eat it now.

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall;
And all the king's horses and all the king's men
Couldn't put Humpty Dumpty together again.

What are little boys made of, made of?
What are little boys made of?
Snaps and snails, and puppy dogs' tails;
And that's what little boys are made of, made of.

What are little girls made of, made of?
What are little girls made of?
Sugar and spice, and all that's nice;
And that's what little girls are made of, made of.

CHAPTER THREE

ANN AND JANE TAYLOR

ANN AND JANE TAYLOR were born in London in 1782 and 1783, respectively. They were the daughters of Isaac Taylor and Ann (Martin) Taylor, both of whom were richly endowed with literary and artistic talent. Isaac Taylor was, indeed, the most famous lay preacher of his time and a writer and artist of note. Mrs. Taylor, who was also a writer, lived to see the Boston edition of her *Practical Hints to Young Females*, which was published in 1820.

With such gifted people for parents, it is not at all surprising that Jane and Ann Taylor should have become poets. But a talent for writing does not tell the whole story of their rich inheritance. They had a home life as simple, as well-ordered, and as beautiful as any of which we have record. The school of poetry they founded is built upon the simple piety and charm of an old-fashioned English home.

In 1786, when the sisters were still small children, their father moved from London to Lavenham—the very name is like a poem—in Suffolk. There, in the English countryside, among the cheerful Suffolk cottages with their gable ends, thatched roofs, and embowered porches, Jane and Ann began an idyllic child life. There were plays and impersonations, charming picnics in the woods, the serious responsibilities of dolls and dancing lessons. The girls knew all the village characters and were on good terms with their neighbors. They knew all the flowers and birds of Suffolk; even the animals of the neighborhood were known to them by name and nature.

Of the girls, Jane was the more lively. She began to

compose plays and verses at a very early age. But it is a mistake to suppose that she was principal poet of the two. As a matter of fact, they were evenly matched, and their manner of thought and literary style were almost identical, though each poem was completely the product of one or the other and was usually signed *Jane* or *Ann*. Their career in print began when Ann sent a rhymed answer to a puzzle in the *Minor's Pocket Book*. Jane's first printed poem, *The Beggar Boy*, appeared in the same periodical. Presently the publishers, Darton and Harvey, wrote to Isaac Taylor, enclosing certain "trifles" to be divided among the members of his family and asking if they would give them some specimens of easy poetry for young children when "any of their harps were tuned and their muse in good humor." The result of this application was *Original Poems for Infant Minds*, in two volumes, the first volume coming out in 1804.

This work, the first of its kind, attained a great success. It was translated into German, Dutch, and Russian, and became very much the fashion for young folks in America. It was followed in 1806 by *Rhymes for the Nursery* and, in 1808, by *Hymns for Infant Minds*.

The happy home life of the Taylors continued until 1813, when Ann married the Rev. Josiah Gilbert, and left the family circle. During the same year, Jane and Isaac went to Ilfracombe, then as now, one of the beauty spots of Devon. While they were away, their father moved his family from Colchester to Ongar, and it was to this quaint little Essex village that Jane and Isaac came home in 1816. There Jane's life came to an end on April 13, 1824. Her parents did not long survive her, Isaac Taylor dying in 1829 and his wife in 1830. The family circle was now completely

broken up, but Ann continued the literary tradition and remained an "authoress" all her life. She died at Nottingham, on December 20, 1866.

I have given this somewhat brief account of the lives of our two poets that their work and their aims and purposes may be better understood and appreciated.

There are two ways in which a writer may climb above the crowd of scribblers: one is by influencing great writers, and the other by producing great writing. The Taylors did the first; did they accomplish the second? Well, it is something to have written *My Mother*, *The Hand-Post*, *Meddlesome Matty*, as did Ann Taylor; something to have given *The Violet* to a world of children, as did her sister. It is something to have pleased thousands and thousands of little hearts with *The Cow*; *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*; and *Good-Night*. We grown-ups may smile at the naïveté of these rhymes, at their obvious didacticism, we may think them empty and even silly; but we cannot ignore the fact that when we were children we loved them sincerely.

Jane and Ann Taylor have, moreover, a special claim to the grateful remembrance of children and of all who delight in children's poetry: they were the first who ever wrote exclusively for children.

For the purpose of examining the poems more closely, let us classify them as Moral Tales, Character Sketches, Versified Advice, and Nature Lyrics.

Moral Tales. That a moral can be driven home with a story has been evident for a good many centuries. "Truth embodied in a tale shall enter in at lowly doors." The Taylors saw the value of the method, and wrote dozens of tales—never, perhaps, for the pleasure derived from telling a good story; but nearly always for the ethical point to

be emphasized. In these tales idle and harum-scarum boys and vain and hoydenish girls meet with richly deserved punishment; while good children—that is, quiet, polite boys, and industrious, sedate little misses—are coddled and cosseted. All this, to be sure, is very much after the manner of Sunday-school literature; but it is the only system of ethics that children understand. Besides, a story is a story, and a child will crack a pretty tough nut to get at the kernel. Many of us, for example, can remember gulping down Bible stories as bits of exciting narration, the while jauntily ignoring the “lesson” embodied in them. It cannot be denied that the moral detracts from the value of the versified stories told by the Taylors; but, for all that, the tales are sprightly narratives. The authors usually employ the rhythmic, rattling, anapestic measure, and they are fond of feminine rhymes and short lines. The stories possess unity, compactness, directness, sincerity. They deal realistically with the commonplace events of childhood. Many of them have a sort of humor, derived from the trouble a mischievous urchin pulls down upon himself. Here is one of the moral tales that is fairly representative of the group.

BALL

“My good little fellow, don’t throw your ball there,
You’ll break neighbor’s windows, I know;
On the end of the house there is room, and to spare,
Go round, you can have a delightful game there,
Without fearing for where you may throw.”

Harry thought he might safely continue his play
With a little more care than before;
So, heedless of all that his father could say,
As soon as he saw he was out of the way
Resolved to have fifty throws more.

Already as far as to forty he rose,
And no mischief had happened at all;
One more, and one more, he successfully throws,
But when, as he thought, just arrived at the close,
In popped his unfortunate ball.

"I'm sure that I thought, and I did not intend,"
Poor Harry was going to say;
But soon came the glazier the window to mend,
And both the bright shillings he wanted to spend
He had for his folly to pay.

When little folks think they know better than great,
And what is forbidden them, do,
We must always expect to see, sooner or late,
That such wise little fools have a similar fate,
And that one of the fifty goes through.

Character Sketches. These, like the moral tales, are intended to convey a lesson in conduct. The titles give the clue to the nature of the poems: *The Idle Boy*; *Old Sarah*, and its companion piece, *Old Susan*; *Crazy Robert*; *the Chatterbox*; *Contented John*; *For a Little Girl that did not Like to be Washed*. They inculcate ideals of industry, kindness to animals, veneration for the aged, thoughtfulness, temperance—those virtues, in a word, most lacking in children. Little boys and girls are admonished to pattern their lives after those of the admirable characters and never—oh, never!—to follow in the fatal footsteps of the mischievous and lazy. No doubt all this is goody-goody and wishy-washy and namby-pamby. It is minor morality, perhaps. But verses of this sort have their use nevertheless, and should have a place, however restricted, in the child's collection of poetry. Here is one of Jane Taylor's character sketches.

MISCHIEF

Let those who're fond of idle tricks,
Of throwing stones, and hurling bricks
And all that sort of fun,
Now hear a tale of idle Jim,
That warning they may take by him,
Nor do as he has done.

In harmless sport or healthful play
He did not pass his time away,
Nor took his pleasure in it;
For mischief was his only joy:
No book, or work, nor even toy,
Could please him for a minute.

A neighbor's house he'd slyly pass,
And throw a stone to break the glass,
And then enjoy the joke!
Or, if a window open stood,
He'd throw in stones, or bits of wood,
To frighten all the folk.

If travelers passing chanced to stay,
Of idle Jim to ask the way,
He never told them right;
And then, quite hardened in his sin,
Rejoiced to see them taken in,
And laughed with all his might.

He'd tie a string across the street,
Just to entangle people's feet,
And make them tumble down;
Indeed, he was disliked so much,
That no good boy would play with such
A nuisance to the town.

At last the neighbors in despair,
This mischief would no longer bear:
And so—to end the tale,

This lad, to cure him of his ways
Was sent to spend some dismal days
Within the county jail.

Perhaps, although they were such charming children themselves, the Taylors did not quite understand children. The study of the child from a scientific standpoint is quite modern. We have learned that the child is not a little man or a young miss: that he is a child and concerned with childish things. We have learned the significance of childhood, and nowadays we are content to allow Nature, in her own good time, to make men and women out of boys and girls, while we watch lest the process be marred or interrupted. We approve Blake's couplet:

The child's toys and the old man's reasons
Are the fruits of the two seasons.

A century ago, children were overtrained, and kept like clipped yews along a garden path: the Taylors were but following the fashions of the day.

Versified Advice. Sometimes the Taylors discard both the narrative and the descriptive type of moralizing and present ideals of childish conduct in versified tracts. This is mere preaching, and makes scant appeal to any normal youngster. But an occasional striking phrase or well-turned expression may dart into the mind and pierce the attention. Especially is this true if the poem is based upon some childish experience, as in the following:

THE WAY TO BE HAPPY

How pleasant it is at the end of the day,
No follies to have to repent,
But reflect on the past, and be able to say,
My time has been properly spent!

When I've finished my business with patience and care,
And been good, and obliging, and kind,
I lie on my pillow, and sleep away there,
With a happy and peaceful mind.

Instead of all this, if it must be confessed
That I careless and idle have been,
I lie down as usual, and go to my rest,
But feel discontented within.

Then, as I dislike all the trouble I've had,
In future I'll try to prevent it,
For I never am naughty without being sad,
Or good—without being contented.

Memory of my own childhood tells me that those last two lines are not altogether true; but they are, at least, well phrased.

Nature Lyrics. Some of these are very beautiful. Ten or fifteen could be chosen that would rank with the best nature verse for children. Many of them, however, are injured as pure nature poems, by the Tayloresque moralizing. Apparently Jane and Ann were able to find

Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones.

But this is no more than Gray does, or Cowper often, or even Wordsworth occasionally. And the Taylors show a genuine love of nature in her prettiest aspects and expressions.

THE POPPY

High on a bright and sunny bed
A scarlet poppy grew,
And up it held its staring head,
And thrust it in full view.

Yet no attention did it win,
By all these efforts made,
And less unwelcome had it been,
In some retired shade.

Although within its scarlet breast
No sweet perfume was found,
It seemed to think itself the best
Of all the flowers around.

From this may I a hint obtain,
And take great care indeed,
Lest I appear as pert and vain
As does this gaudy weed.

Better known is the following, though the two poems are
as closely twinned as *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*:

THE VIOLET

Down in a green and shady bed,
A modest violet grew.
Its stalk was bent, it hung its head,
As if to hide from view.

And yet it was a lovely flower,
Its color bright and fair;
It might have graced a lovely bower,
Instead of hiding there.

Yet thus it was content to bloom,
In modest tints arrayed;
And there diffuse a sweet perfume,
Within the silent shade.

Then let me to the valley go
This pretty flower to see;
That I may also learn to grow
In sweet humility.

The tacking of a moral upon every poem, already referred to herein, is a feature of the Taylors' work which prevents it from being fine art. The fact that a moral can be found in a poem or a story does not necessarily impair the value of the production; the only question is of the method by which the moral is drawn. If it be hung on at the end, in the manner of Æsop's fables, the result is bad art, because it implies that the author does not feel certain that his lesson is discernible. But this is not so ruinous as the method which, to use the words of Hawthorne, "impales the story with its moral, as by sticking a pin through a butterfly—thus at once depriving it of life, and causing it to stiffen in an ungainly and unnatural attitude." Impaling the story is precisely what the Taylors do. Indeed, sometimes they not only impale the poem with the moral, as if they were sticking a pin through a butterfly, but even tack a notice below to the effect that the butterfly shown was killed while loitering about a flower that it had been forbidden to touch. Even in their Nature lyrics, the determination to hunt the moral out into the open prevents them from seeing the beauty of the thicket.

Another charge against the Taylors could be formulated on the fact that their vocabulary is prosaic, that they employ few suggestive phrases or figures of speech, and that their musical powers are limited. Before proceeding to trial on this count, however, we should, in all fairness, consider the avowed purpose of the authors, as frankly and self-confidently expressed in the preface to their first work, *Original Poems for Infant Minds* (1804):

The deficiency of the compositions as poetry is by no means a secret to their authors; but it was thought desirable to abridge every poetic freedom and figure, and to dismiss even such words

as, by being less familiar, might give, perhaps, a false idea to their little readers, or at least make a chasm in the chain of conception. Images, which to us are so familiar that we forget their imagery, may be insurmountable stumbling-blocks to children, who have but few literal ideas: and though it may be allowable to introduce a simple kind, which a little maternal attention will easily explain, and which may tend to excite a taste for natural and poetic beauty, everything superfluous it has been a primary endeavor to avoid.

In spite of its defects, the poetry of Ann and Jane Taylor should be accessible to children and should be known to parents and teachers. The sisters love children—not always intelligently, perhaps, but sincerely. Jane has explained her method of composition: “I try to conjure up some child into my presence, address her suitably, as well as I am able, and when I begin to flag, I say to her, ‘There, love, now you may go.’ ”

It is true, the Taylors are prim and exceedingly proper; but every child who reads their poetry feels that they loved children. They are children’s poets. If they do not always understand children, if they preach and exhort too much, if they are inferior poets—I, for one, do not wish to belittle the veneration and love paid them by generations of children. They write on childish themes: they desire only childish readers. And if we grown-ups must laugh at the old-fashioned moralizing and prosaic sermonizing, let it at least be a kindly laugh, mellowed with appreciation.

Their work met with the approval of Sir Walter Scott, Southey, Whately, Arnold, and a host of others. Moreover, it is something to have been the first to sow poetical seed in the child’s garden, in the endeavor to produce moral fruit, even though others have since grown more fragrant flowers. It is something to have realized childhood and to have

expressed an exquisite sense of gratitude for it in a verse as quaint and as loyal as this:

I thank the goodness and the grace,
That on my birth has smiled,
And made me in these Christian days,
A happy English child.

The best collection of the Taylors' poetry is the one made by E. V. Lucas in 1903, entitled *Original Poems and Others*, with illustrations by F. D. Bedford, published by Wells, Gardner, Darton and Company of London, and obtainable also from Frederick A. Stokes Company, New York. It contains a sympathetic introduction by the compiler, in whose opinion the Taylors have never been equaled or excelled as writers of poetry for children.

The Taylors are also represented in Mary MacLeod's *Children's Poets Series*. The special edition of *Little Ann*, with illustrations by Kate Greenaway, is the prettiest Taylor book ever issued. It was published in 1882 and has since been reprinted by Frederick Warne and Co. *Little Ann* made its first appearance under the title *A True Story* in *Original Poems* (1804).

SELECTIONS FROM ANN AND JANE TAYLOR

THE BABY'S DANCE

Dance, little baby, dance up high:
Never mind, baby, mother is by;
Crow and caper, caper and crow,
There, little baby, there you go;
Up to the ceiling, down to the ground,
Backwards and forwards, round and round:
Then dance, little baby, and mother shall sing,
While the gay merry coral goes ding, ding-a-ding, ding.

Ann

BEAUTIFUL THINGS

What millions of beautiful things there must be
In this mighty world!—who could reckon them all?
The tossing, the foaming, the wide flowing sea,
And thousands of rivers that into it fall.

O there are the mountains, half covered with snow,
With tall and dark trees, like a girdle of green,
And waters that wind in the valley below,
Or roar in the caverns, too deep to be seen.

Vast caves in the earth, full of wonderful things,
The bones of strange animals, jewels, and spars;
Or, far up in Iceland, the hot boiling springs,
Like fountains of feathers, or showers of stars!

Here, spread the sweet meadows with thousands of flowers;
Far away are old woods, that for ages remain;
Wild elephants sleep in the shade of their bowers;
Or troops of young antelopes traverse the plain.

O yes, they are glorious, all, to behold,
And pleasant to read of, and curious to know,
And something of GOD and His wisdom we're told,
Whatever we look at—wherever we go!

Ann

MY MOTHER

Who fed me from her gentle breast,
And hushed me in her arms to rest,
And on my cheek sweet kisses prest?
My Mother.

When sleep forsook my open eye,
Who was it sung sweet hushaby,
And rocked me that I should not cry?
My Mother.

Who sat and watched my infant head,
When sleeping on my cradle bed,
And tears of sweet affection shed?
My Mother.

When pain and sickness made me cry,
Who gazed upon my heavy eye,
And wept for fear that I should die?
My Mother.

Who dressed my doll in clothes so gay,
And taught me pretty how to play,
And minded all I had to say?
My Mother.

Who ran to help me when I fell,
And would some pretty story tell,
Or kiss the place and make it well?
My Mother.

Who taught my infant lips to pray,
And love GOD's holy book and day,
And walk in wisdom's pleasant way?
My Mother.

And can I ever cease to be
Affectionate and kind to thee,
Who was so very kind to me,
My Mother?

Ah! no, the thought I cannot bear,
And if GOD please my life to spare,
I hope I shall reward thy care,
My Mother.

When thou art feeble, old and gray,
My healthy arm shall be thy stay,
And I will soothe thy pains away,
My Mother.

And when I see thee hang thy head,
'Twill be my turn to watch *thy* bed,
And tears of sweet affection shed,
My Mother.
Ann

THE STAR

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are!
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky.

When the blazing sun is gone,
When he nothing shines upon,
Then you show your little light,
Twinkle, twinkle, all the night.

Then the traveler in the dark,
Thanks you for your tiny spark!
He could not see which way to go,
If you did not twinkle so.

In the dark blue sky you keep,
And often through my curtains peep,
For you never shut your eye
Till the sun is in the sky.

As your bright and tiny spark
Lights the traveler in the dark,
Though I know not what you are,
Twinkle, twinkle, little star.

FINERY

In an elegant frock, trimmed with beautiful lace,
And hair nicely curled hanging over her face,
Young Fanny went out to the house of a friend,
With a large *little* party the evening to spend.

“Ah! how they will all be delighted, I guess,
And stare with surprise at my handsome new dress!”
Thus said the vain girl, and her little heart beat,
Impatient the happy young party to meet.

But, alas! they were all too intent on their play,
To observe the fine clothes of this lady so gay;
And thus all her trouble quite lost its design;—
For they saw she was proud, but forgot she was fine.

’Twas Lucy, though only in simple white clad
(Nor trimmings, nor laces, nor jewels she had),
Whose cheerful good-nature delighted them more
Than Fanny and all the fine garments she wore.

’Tis better to have a sweet smile on one’s face,
Than to wear a fine frock with an elegant lace;
For the good-natured girl is loved best in the main,
If her dress is but decent, though ever so plain.

Jane

THE SNOWDROP

Now the spring is coming on,
Now the snow and ice are gone,
Come, my little snowdrop root,
Will you not begin to shoot?

Ah! I see your pretty head
Peeping on the flower bed,
Looking all so green and gay
On this fine and pleasant day.

For the mild south wind doth blow,
And hath melted all the snow,
And the sun shines out so warm,
You need not fear another storm.

So your pretty flower show,
And your petals white undo,
Then you'll hang your modest head
Down upon my flower bed.

THE VULGAR LITTLE LADY

"But, mamma, now," said Charlotte, "pray, don't you believe
That I'm better than Jenny, my nurse?
Only see my red shoes, and the lace on my sleeve;
Her clothes are a thousand times worse.

"I ride in my coach, and have nothing to do,
And the country folks stare at me so;
And nobody dares to control me but you,
Because I'm a lady, you know.

"Then, servants are vulgar, and I am genteel;
So, really, 'tis out of the way,
To think that I should not be better a deal
Than maids, and such people as they."

"Gentility, Charlotte," her mother replied,
"Belongs to no station or place;
And nothing's so vulgar as folly and pride,
Though dressed in red slippers and lace.

"Not all the fine things that fine ladies possess
Should teach them the poor to despise;
For 'tis in good manners, and not in good dress,
That the truest gentility lies."

Ann

A PRETTY THING

Who am I that shine so bright,
With my pretty yellow light,
Peeping through your curtains gray?
Tell me, little girl, I pray.

When the sun is gone, I rise,
In the very silent skies;
And a cloud or two doth skim
Round about my silver rim.

All the little stars do seem
Hidden by my brighter beam;
And among them I do ride,
Like a queen in all her pride.

Then the reaper goes along,
Singing forth a merry song,
While I light the shaking leaves,
And the yellow harvest sheaves.

Little girl, consider well,
Who this simple tale doth tell;
And I think you'll guess it soon,
For I only am the Moon.

THE LITTLE LARK

I hear a pretty bird, but hark!
I cannot see it anywhere.
O! it is a little lark,
Singing in the morning air.
Little lark, do tell me why
You are singing in the sky?

Other little birds at rest,
Have not yet begun to sing;
Every one is in its nest,

With its head behind its wing:
Little lark, then, tell me why
You're so early in the sky?

You look no bigger than a bee,
In the middle of the blue;
Up above the poplar tree,
I can hardly look at you:
Little lark, do tell me why
You are mounted up so high.

'Tis to watch the silver star,
Sinking slowly in the skies;
And beyond the mountain far,
See the glorious sun arise:
Little lady, this is why
I am mounted up so high.

'Tis to sing a merry song
To the pleasant morning light;
Why stay in my nest so long,
When the sun is shining bright?
Little lady, this is why
I sing so early in the sky.

To the little birds below,
I do sing a merry tune;
And I let the plowman know
He must come to labor soon.
Little lady, this is why
I am singing in the sky.

CHAPTER FOUR

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

THE mere fact that a poet loves children does not qualify him for the pleasant occupation of writing for children. He must have the rare power of tracing the sinuous paths back from manhood to infancy. He must carry into the interests and activities of childhood the mature qualities of mind and heart. If he is to be a poet for children, he must have the childish outlook on life and the ripened powers of the artist.

In this respect Robert Louis Stevenson is chief among children's poets. I know of no writer, man or woman, who has succeeded so well in carrying over into maturity the lovable qualities of childhood. "I am one of the few people in the world," he states, "who do not forget their own lives." Stevenson was never one to ignore any fact or experience of his life, and all of his experiences were significant to him. "It is long ere we discover how rich we are," Emerson says. "But our wiser years still run back to the despised recollections of childhood, and always we are fishing up some wonderful article out of that pond."

Stevenson was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1850. In his second year he suffered a severe attack of croup, and this, coupled with an hereditary weakness of lungs and throat, led to a series of attacks of chills, pneumonia, and bronchitis. From this he never recovered: the remainder of his life was a struggle against tuberculosis. There was only one consolation: his serious and protracted illness brought into his life his nurse, "Cummie," remembered so fondly and immortalized so securely in the prose and verse of R. L. S.

His illness made steady schooling impossible. But travel on the Continent with his mother, the acquisition of other languages, and an ever-increasing passion for reading and writing filled his life. When he entered the University of Edinburgh, he was already imbued with the ambition to become an author and had tried his 'prentice hand on many different kinds of writing. Acting on the wish of his father, an engineer and a famous builder of lighthouses, Louis studied engineering. But the demands of literature were too strong to be resisted; engineering was given up.

Soon afterwards he met in France an American lady, Mrs. Osbourne, with whom he fell in love, and when she returned to her home in California, he soon followed. There they were married. From this time on he was definitely and forever a man of letters. Sketches, short stories, poems, and romances came in rapid succession.

Three years after his marriage Stevenson established his family in the south of France, where they lived until his physician advised a change of climate. They tried the Adirondacks in New York, then, chartering a yacht, went for long cruises through the islands of the South Seas, searching for health. In 1890 he settled down in Samoa, and there, in 1894, he died, mourned by the entire English-reading world.

A Child's Garden of Verses was published in 1885. Mr. Graham Balfour tells us that it was prompted by the verses in Kate Greenaway's *Birthday Book*: "Louis took the *Birthday Book* up one day, and saying, 'These are rather nice rhymes, and I don't think they would be very difficult to do,' proceeded to try his hand." But he dedicated *A Child's Garden* to Cummie, his old nurse, because, as he says, she was the only one who would understand the poems—

which certainly implies that they represent thoughts and scenes and incidents in his own early life.

Stevenson's complete poems are to be found in *Poems and Ballads*, published by Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. This volume contains all the child poems, under the general title *A Child's Garden of Verses*. There are many other editions.

Analysis of his sixty poems reveals five themes.

(1) *Bed-land*. Stevenson's continued illness tied him to his bed almost constantly from infancy to adolescence; naturally, his poems of childhood are reminiscent of the sickroom. But the Bed-land of his poems is not in the least reminiscent of childish suffering. The bed is a boat in which he travels to strange countries, in which he discovers the Northwest Passage to the Delectable Land. The universe he inhabits during that delightful time just before he drops off to sleep, is much more fascinating than the wideawake world. Here is a poem on that theme.

YOUNG NIGHT THOUGHT

All night long and every night,
When my mamma puts out the light,
I see the people marching by,
As plain as day, before my eye.

Armies and emperors and kings,
All carrying different kinds of things,
And marching in so grand a way,
You never saw the like by day.

So fine a show was never seen
At the great circus on the green;
For every kind of beast and man
Is marching in that caravan.

At first they move a little slow,
But still the faster on they go,
And still beside them close I keep
Until we reach the town of sleep.

Another poetic exposition of the same subject, the child's travels in dreamland, is this:

THE LAND OF NOD

From breakfast on through all the day
At home among my friends I stay,
But every night I go abroad
Afar into the Land of Nod.

All by myself I have to go,
With none to tell me what to do—
All alone beside the streams
And up the mountain-sides of dreams.

The strangest things are there for me,
Both things to eat and things to see,
And many frightening sights abroad
Till morning in the Land of Nod.

Try as I like to find the way,
I never can get back by day,
Nor can remember plain and clear
The curious music that I hear.

Even when he must lie abed all day long, Bed-land is still a delightful country. Here is how he pictures it:

THE LAND OF COUNTERPANE

When I was sick and lay abed,
I had two pillows at my head
And all my toys beside me lay
To keep me happy all the day.

And sometimes for an hour or so
 I watched my leaden soldiers go,
 With different uniforms and drills,
 Among the bed-clothes, through the hills.

And sometimes sent my ships in fleets
 All up and down among the sheets;
 Or brought my trees and houses out,
 And planted cities all about.

I was the giant great and still
 That sits upon the pillow-hill,
 And sees before him, dale and plain,
 The pleasant Land of Counterpane.

(2) *Water in Motion.* Stevenson loves to sing of rain, of running water, of the sea. The babble of a brook or the mighty symphony of the sea sets his senses stirring. And no poet has more clearly suggested the music of running water than has Stevenson in his *Looking-Glass River*. Notice the smooth-gliding, soft-gliding liquids:

Smooth it slides upon its travel,
 Here a wimple, there a gleam—
 O the clean gravel!
 O the smooth stream!

Sailing blossoms, silver fishes,
 Paven pools as clear as air—
 How a child wishes
 To live down there!

We can see our colored faces
 Floating on the shaken pool
 Down in cool places,
 Dim and very cool;

Till a wind or water wrinkle,
 Dripping marten, plumping trout,

Spreads in a twinkle
And blots all out.

See the rings pursue each other;
All below grows black as night,
Just as if mother
Had blown out the light!

Patience, children, just a minute—
See the spreading circles die;
The stream and all in it
Will clear by and by.

(3) *The Weather and the Seasons.* Our author takes at once a poet's and a child's delight in the changes of the weather and the panorama of the seasons. The winds, the skies, the moon and sun, the phenomena of winter and of summer—of these he sings, simply and musically. I quote the familiar poem *Windy Nights*. Read it aloud and observe the rhythmic gallop of the verses, wonderfully suggestive of the theme.

Whenever the moon and stars are set,
Whenever the wind is high,
All night long in the dark and wet,
A man goes riding by.
Late in the night when the fires are out,
Why does he gallop and gallop about?

Whenever the trees are crying aloud,
And the ships are tossed at sea,
By, on the highway, low and loud,
By at the gallop goes he.
By at the gallop he goes, and then
By he comes back at the gallop again.

(4) *Travel.* "Imaginative" travel would describe this group better. Every child should, by all rights, have his

home near a stream, a road, a railroad—some outlet to the world—to provide an accessible avenue for his imagination to travel over. The child in the Garden has many such routes. As he clambers to the top of the cherry tree or swings out over the garden wall, he obtains alluring glimpses of the great world; as he observes the sun tracing his journey overhead, he in fancy travels with it around the globe; or as he watches the brook carry away his little boat, he allows his mind to drift with it down the stream.

WHERE GO THE BOATS?

Dark brown is the river,
Golden is the sand.
It flows along forever,
With trees on either hand.

Green leaves a-floating,
Castles of the foam,
Boats of mine a-boating—
Where will all come home?

On goes the river
And out past the mill,
Away down the valley,
Away down the hill.

Away down the river,
A hundred miles or more,
Other little children
Shall bring my boats ashore.

Perhaps he takes a trip by rail, and, like any other child, presses his face against the window to follow the kaleidoscopic view without. Notice in the poem *From a Railway Carriage* the rattle and dash of the train; it is almost as unforgettable as Mark Twain's famous jingle, *Punch, Brothers, Punch*.

Faster than fairies, faster than witches,
Bridges and houses, hedges and ditches;
And charging along like troops in a battle,
All through the meadows the horses and cattle:
All of the sights of the hill and the plain
Fly as thick as driving rain;
And ever again, in the wink of an eye,
Painted stations whistle by.

Here is a child who clambers and scrambles,
All by himself and gathering brambles;
Here is a tramp who stands and gazes;
And there is the green for stringing the daisies!
Here is a cart run away in the road
Lumping along with man and load;
And here is a mill and there is a river:
Each a glimpse and gone forever!

Later in life Stevenson became a traveler indeed, a veritable globe-trotter, the kind of traveler who could direct his friends to Samoa by some such advice as "Take the boat at San Francisco and get off at the nearest stop to the left." But it is doubtful if any voyage, even with a donkey, ever gave him, or gives his readers, greater pleasure than these childish imaginative journeys round the world.

(5) *Play.* The Child in the Garden is a solitary child. Alone with his blocks, he constructs a great city, which he peoples with his imagination; sitting by the winter fire, he descries therein great armies, or he amuses himself

Sitting safe in nursery nooks
Reading picture story-books.

Or perhaps, while his parents chat about the fire,

And do not play at anything,

he takes his toy gun and prowls about among the chairs and behind the sofa, playing Indian. Or he chooses a certain corner of the garden and there reënacts all the stories he has heard.

Sometimes, however, the child has companions. Stevenson speaks (in *A Child's Play in Virginibus Puerisque*) of the splendid games he had with his cousins. Occasionally a "fury of play" would control him; and whether alone or with some of his numerous cousins, he must always act out whatever whim came into his head. Indoor games they are, for the most part. The children construct a ship out of back-bed-room chairs, provision it with such invaluable cargo as drinking water, an apple, and a piece of cake, and scour the seas "for days and days." They find the hay-mow, too, a splendid place to play—as thousands of us have discovered, I hope. And the clothes-basket out in the tall meadow grass—the children jump in and they are pirates! Oh, *Pleasant Land of Play!* Let me quote in this connection the familiar poem, *The Land of Story-Books*.

At evening when the lamp is lit,
Around the fire my parents sit;
They sit at home and talk and sing,
And do not play at anything.

Now, with my little gun, I crawl
All in the dark along the wall,
And follow round the forest track
Away behind the sofa back.

There, in the night, where none can spy,
All in my hunter's camp I lie,
And play at books that I have read
Till it is time to go to bed.

These are the hills, these are the woods,
These are my starry solitudes;
And there the river by whose brink
The roaring lions come to drink.

I see the others far away
As if in fire-lit camp they lay,
And I, like to an Indian scout,
Around their party prowled about.

So, when my nurse comes in for me,
Home I return across the sea,
And go to bed with backward looks
At my dear Land of Story-books.

In his poems for children, Stevenson rarely tries to moralize. To be sure, he occasionally delivers a morsel of advice; but watch his face closely and you may observe his eyes twinkle. I once heard a serious-minded person teaching Stevenson's *Good and Bad Children* as a sermon in rhyme! Imagine trying to teach this seriously:

Children, you are very little,
And your bones are very brittle;
If you would grow great and stately,
You must try to walk sedately.

No, Stevenson is only fooling; this is only his Chaucerian archness, only a gentle satire on the homiletic verses for children, so common till his day. Stevenson does not talk down to children or preach up to children. All the ethics this poet teaches them is expressed in the last verse of the following stanza:

A child should always say what's true,
And speak when he is spoken to,
And behave mannerly at table—
At least as far as he is able.

Now and then Stevenson's fun interferes with the verisimilitude of the poems as documents of childhood experience. No sensitive adult can read *The Cow* without exquisite enjoyment of the drollery in such lines as "She gives us cream *with all her might*," or

She *walks* among the meadow grass
And *eats* the meadow flowers,

whereas this merely disturbs the child. The rest of the poem is so evidently literal and serious that the young reader is inclined rather to quarrel with the inaccuracy than to smile at the joke.

That which makes Robert Louis Stevenson the greatest of children's poets is his wonderful power of identifying himself with the child; his simplicity; his genuine lyric power; his exquisite workmanship; his hatred of cant; and his unquenchable optimism. What a life was his! Beset from his very birth by consumption, fleeing hither and yon in the vain hope of escaping his hereditary foe, writing often on the couch of sickness, so weak that he could scarcely grasp his pen, and dying at last at the age of forty-four on a remote island where he had fortified himself for one last stand—never did a weak thought, a whimpering sentiment, a morbid fancy, find utterance. No "idle singer of an empty day" did he consider himself; he faced the world bravely, lived a simple, strenuous life, enjoyed his friends, extracted the uttermost of enjoyment from each day. What inspiration in words like these:

Leave not, my soul, the unfoughten field, nor leave
Thy debts dishonored, nor thy place desert
Without due service rendered. For thy life,
Up, spirit, and defend that fort of clay,

Thy body, now beleaguered; whether soon
Or late she fall; whether today thy friends
Bewail thee dead, or, after years, a man
Grown old in honor and the friends of peace.
Contend, my soul, for moments and for hours;
Each is with service pregnant; each reclaimed
Is as a kingdom conquered, where to reign.

This is a stanza of the requiem he wrote for himself:

Under the wide and starry sky,
Dig the grave and let me lie;
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I laid me down with a will.

And this a prayer:

If I have faltered more or less
In my great task of happiness;
If I have moved along my race
And shown no glorious morning face;
If beams from happy human eyes
Have moved me not; if morning skies,
Books, and my food, and summer rain,
Knocked on my sullen heart in vain:—
Lord, Thy most pointed pleasure take
And stab my spirit broad awake;
Or, Lord, if too obdurate I,
Choose Thou, before that spirit die,
A piercing pain, a killing sin,
And to my dead heart run them in!

Stevenson expresses his philosophy in prose: "There is an idea abroad among moral people that they should make their neighbors good. One person I have to make good: myself. But my duty to my neighbor is much more nearly expressed by saying that I have to make him happy—if I may."

SELECTIONS FROM ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

TO ALISON CUNNINGHAM

From Her Boy

For the long nights you lay awake
 And watched for my unworthy sake:
 For your most comfortable hand
 That led me through the uneven land:
 For all the story-books you read:
 For all the pains you comforted:
 For all you pitied, all you bore,
 In sad and happy days of yore:—
 My second Mother, my first Wife,
 The angel of my infant life—
 From the sick child, now well and old,
 Take, nurse, the little book you hold!

And grant it, Heaven, that all who read
 May find as dear a nurse at need,
 And every child who lists my rhyme,
 In the bright, fireside, nursery clime,
 May hear it in as kind a voice
 As made my childish days rejoice.

MY SHADOW

I have a little shadow that goes in and out with me,
 And what can be the use of him is more than I can see.
 He is very, very like me from the heels up to the head;
 And I see him jump before me, when I jump into my bed.

The funniest thing about him is the way he likes to grow—
 Not at all like proper children, which is always very slow;
 For he sometimes shoots up taller like an india-rubber ball,
 And he sometimes gets so little that there's none of him at all.

He hasn't got a notion of how children ought to play,
 And can only make a fool of me in every sort of way.

He stays so close beside me, he's a coward you can see;
I'd think shame to stick to nursie as that shadow sticks to me!

One morning, very early, before the sun was up,
I rose and found the shining dew on every buttercup;
But my lazy little shadow, like an arrant sleepy-head,
Had stayed at home behind me and was fast asleep in bed.

THE LAMPLIGHTER

My tea is nearly ready and the sun has left the sky;
It's time to take the window to see Leerie going by;
For every night at tea-time and before you take your seat,
With lantern and with ladder he comes posting up the street.

Now Tom would be a driver and Maria go to sea,
And my papa's a banker and as rich as he can be;
But I, when I am stronger and can choose what I'm to do,
O Leerie, I'll go round at night and light the lamps with you!

For we are very lucky, with a lamp before the door,
And Leerie stops to light it as he lights so many more;
And oh! before you hurry by with ladder and with light;
O Leerie, see a little child and nod to him tonight!

RAIN

The rain is raining all around,
It falls on field and tree,
It rains on the umbrellas here,
And on the ships at sea.

BLOCK CITY

What are you able to build with your blocks?
Castles and palaces, temples and docks.
Rain may keep raining, and others go roam,
But I can be happy and building at home.

Let the sofa be mountains, the carpet be sea,
There I'll establish a city for me:

A kirk and a mill and a palace beside,
And a harbor as well where my vessels may ride.

Great is the palace with pillar and wall,
A sort of a tower on the top of it all,
And steps coming down in an orderly way
To where my toy vessels lie safe in the bay.

This one is sailing and that one is moored:
Hark to the song of the sailors on board!
And see, on the steps of my palace, the kings
Coming and going with presents and things!

Now I have done with it, down let it go!
All in a moment the town is laid low.
Block upon block lying scattered and free,
What is there left of my town by the sea?

Yet as I saw it, I see it again,
The kirk and the palace, the ships and the men,
And as long as I live and where'er I may be,
I'll always remember my town by the sea.

THE FLOWERS

All the names I know from nurse:
Gardener's garters, Shepherd's purse,
Bachelor's buttons, Lady's smock,
And the Lady Hollyhock.

Fairy places, fairy things,
Fairy woods where the wild bee wings,
Tiny trees for tiny dames—
These must all be fairy names!

Tiny woods below whose boughs
Shady fairies weave a house;
Tiny tree-tops, rose or thyme,
Where the braver fairies climb!

Fair are grown-up people's trees,
But the fairest woods are these;
Where, if I were not so tall,
I should live for good and all.

TO AUNTIE

*Chief of our aunts—not only I,
But all your dozen of nurselings cry—
What did the other children do?
And what were childhood, wanting you?*

TRAVEL

I should like to rise and go
Where the golden apples grow;—
Where below another sky
Parrot islands anchored lie,
And, watched by cockatoos and goats,
Lonely Crusoes building boats;—
Where in sunshine reaching out
Eastern cities, miles about,
Are with mosque and minaret
Among sandy gardens set,
And the rich goods from near and far
Hang for sale in the bazaar;—
Where the Great Wall round China goes,
And on one side the desert blows,
And with bell and voice and drum,
Cities on the other hum;—
Where are forests, hot as fire,
Wide as England, tall as a spire,
Full of apes and cocoa-nuts
And the negro hunters' huts;—
Where the knotty crocodile
Lies and blinks in the Nile,
And the red flamingo flies
Hunting fish before his eyes;—
Where in jungles, near and far,
Man-devouring tigers are,

Lying close and giving ear
 Lest the hunt be drawing near,
 Or a comer-by be seen
 Swinging in a palanquin;—
 Where among the desert sands
 Some deserted city stands,
 All its children, sweep and prince,
 Grown to manhood ages since,
 Not a foot in street or house,
 Not a stir of child or mouse,
 And when kindly falls the night,
 In all the town no spark of light,
 There I'll come when I'm a man
 With a camel caravan;
 Light a fire in the gloom
 Of some dusty dining room;
 See the pictures on the walls,
 Heroes, fights, and festivals;
 And in a corner find the toys
 Of the old Egyptian boys.

AUTUMN FIRES

In the other gardens
 And all up the vale,
 From the autumn bonfires
 See the smoke trail!

Pleasant summer over
 And all the summer flowers,
 The red fire blazes,
 The gray smoke towers.

Sing a song of seasons!
 Something bright in all!
 Flowers in the summer,
 Fires in the fall!

TO ANY READER

As from the house your mother sees
 You playing round the garden trees,
So you may see, if you will look
 Through the windows of this book,
Another child, far, far away,
 And in another garden, play.
But do not think you can at all,
 By knocking on the window, call
That child to hear you. He intent
 Is all on his play-business bent.
He does not hear; he will not look,
 Nor yet be lured out of this book.
For, long ago, the truth to say
 He has grown up and gone away,
And it is but a child of air
 That lingers in the garden there.

CHAPTER FIVE

WILLIAM BLAKE

WILLIAM BLAKE, the morning star that preluded the dawn of the Romantic Revival, one of the most picturesque figures in English literature and art, an inspired lyric poet, displays in no more striking way the brilliance and uniqueness of his genius than in the poems he wrote for children. There are not many of these poems, nor did he have the good fortune, as did Jane and Ann Taylor, as did Robert Louis Stevenson, to found a school of children's poetry; nevertheless he is one of the most important bards of childhood.

Those events of Blake's life which are of interest to us are easily set forth. He was born in London in 1757, the second child in a family of five. His father was a hosier, able to give his children but a meager education. William displayed talent for drawing very early in life, and had his father's means sufficed, he would doubtless have taken up painting as a career. As it was, he was apprenticed to an engraver, and engraving was, all through his life, his means of livelihood. He married, in 1782, Catharine Boucher, with whom he had as happy a married life as a man of Blake's peculiar temperament could have had.

His first volume of poetry, *Poetical Sketches*, was published in 1783. In 1787 appeared *Songs of Innocence*, and in 1794 *Songs of Experience*, the two little volumes upon which Blake's fame as a children's poet rests. Blake wrote the verses, made the drawings, engraved both on copper, made the plates, printed the pages on a hand press, and bound them together—literally made the book.

Of his quarrels and his poverty, of his increasing absorp-

tion in mysticism and neglect of practical matters, even of those relating to his own art, we need not speak. He wrote little poetry after 1794, devoting his time to engraving and to his "visions" and his "prophecies." He died in 1827.

On the Romantic Revival we may touch but lightly here, though Blake's poetry for children is a part of this revival. Briefly stated, the Romantic Revival was a return to Nature. After a century and a half of Classicism, of conventionalism and imitation, of clever prose and fine-spun "head" poetry, after the worship of form and finish and artificiality, after the wit of Pope and Dryden and the brilliancy of Addison and the ponderosity of Johnson, the pendulum begins to swing back toward naturalness, toward originality, toward the expression of strong, healthy, spontaneous human feeling; back to Nature—to flowers and animals, to the sea, the woods, the mountains, to love and hate, to real men and women, to genuine emotions. Literature once more roots itself in life and life's realities; literature once more is woven out of the material that natural, normal life provides. "Let us try," the writers of the period may be thought of as saying, "Let us try to discover what are the freshest, the simplest, the most attractive and emotion provoking themes of poetry, the themes which are at once most closely akin to Nature and most susceptible of artistic treatment." Now, what is that which excites the keenest, most exquisite feelings, which is most fascinating and romantic, which bears the most authentic stamp of Nature? *The child and childhood.* One of the most revolutionary discoveries made by the Romanticists was that children and childhood are among the finest subjects of poetry. And, from the time of Blake and Wordsworth to the present, few poets have failed to touch upon child life, whereas before that day no poets except Watts and Henry

Vaughan and a few others had conceived of poetry for children or poetry about children.

It was William Blake that made this discovery. His *Songs of Innocence* appeared in 1787; his *Songs of Experience* seven years later—which was four years before Wordsworth wrote his first poem about children, *We are Seven*. Blake had no children of his own, but he loved children and regarded them as the most beautiful and most mysterious of all creatures. He had, like Vaughan and Wordsworth, vague ideas about a previous existence; he conceived of childhood as “appareled in celestial light” and of children as “trailing clouds of glory” as they come from their home in heaven. Later, “shades of the prison-house begin to close upon” them; or, as Blake himself expresses it,

When thy little heart doth wake,
Then the dreadful light shall break.

It is interesting to see how the poems in the two groups, *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*, pair off with each other, the companion piece in the second group sounding a sad and solemn echo to the songs of “pleasant glee,” of “merry cheer,” in the first group. Compare, as illustrating this contrast, the *Nurse's Song* from the first book with that from the second.

NURSE'S SONG

(From *Songs of Innocence*)

When the voices of children are heard on the green,
And laughing is heard on the hill,
My heart is at rest within my breast,
And everything else is still.

“Then come home, my children, the sun is gone down,
And the dews of night arise;
Come, come, leave off play, and let us away,
Till the morning appears in the skies.”

“No, no, let us play, for it is yet day,
And we cannot go to sleep;
Besides, in the sky the little birds fly,
And the hills are all covered with sheep.”

“Well, well, go and play till the light fades away
And then go home to bed.”
The little ones leaped, and shouted, and laughed,
And all the hills echoèd.

NURSE'S SONG

(From *Songs of Experience*)

When the voices of children are heard on the green,
And whisperings are in the dale,
The days of my youth rise fresh in my mind,
My face turns green and pale.

Then come home, my children, the sun is gone down,
And the dews of night arise;
Your spring and your day are wasted in play,
And your winter and night in disguise.

It is doubtful if Blake intended his childhood songs for children. He appears to have had no specific child or children in mind; he does not use a diction or style materially different from that which he employs in his other poetry; and he seems to make little effort to get the point of view of children of his acquaintance. If I understand Blake, he would have disdained all this—which is a part of the stock in trade of most children's writers. He does select themes that appeal to children, and in general his treatment and style are admirable for the creation of children's poetry. But

this is a nappy accident. It would seem that Blake was inspired to sing his childhood songs by the intuitive perception that children and childhood are felicitous and appropriate subjects for his melodies; and he was guided by his innate understanding of children, by the dim but fascinating memories of his own infancy, and by the Platonic conception that children have had a previous existence in a happier world, that their first stage is innocence and faith, which gradually gives way to evil and disillusionment. Under the spell of this inspiration and led by these principles, Blake produced twenty or thirty poems that are masterpieces of verse for children. It happened because Blake was Blake, and because Blake was born at an opportune time.

The introductory poem to *Songs of Innocence* expresses Blake's point of view under a charming symbolism. As the poet is "piping down the valleys wild," he sees a child *upon a cloud*. The child asks him to pipe a song about a lamb, so the poet weaves this into his melody. Then he is asked to *sing* his songs, finally to *write* them. For this the poet uses the simplest implement, a reed pen dipped in stained water.

Blake's art is wholly a matter of intuition, of inspiration, of following guidance *from above*. This was always his way. He set up the most extravagant claims of direct supernatural inspiration. He averred that he had prophetic powers, that he was "under the direction of messengers from heaven, daily and nightly"; he speaks of one of his poems, *Jerusalem*, as having been written "from immediate dictation, without premeditation and even against my will."

Whatever may be the truth about this puzzling matter, it is certain that Blake was not a conscious, deliberating, theorizing bard. He did not attempt to guide Pegasus with

a checkrein. Moved by a compelling impulse—from within or from without—he yielded himself to this power and permitted it to bear him whither it would.

This accounts, of course, for the effect of spontaneity so noticeable in Blake's poetry. His choicest verses—genuine “native wood-notes wild”—have a perfection of form as if the words had been conjured into their proper places by a kind of poetic legerdemain—“dictated” to him, as he says; or as if the lucky poet had “found” the entire poem in one of his piping excursions “down the valleys wild,” found it fixed in unalterable, inevitable form; genuine “underwoods,” not a “plantation.” It accounts, too, for the clear singing note in Blake's best poetry: they were songs before they were poems. Of all the children's poets Blake has the most exquisite lyric power. It is interesting to note that Blake, though ignorant of formal music, set some of his poems to melodies of his own, which, according to one of his friends, were singularly beautiful.

Blake's poetry for children is characterized by extreme simplicity—simplicity of thought, simplicity of phrase. Collins, in his beautiful ode, calls simplicity “sister meek of Truth.” And so it is: and nowhere is the presence of this meek sister so desirable as it is in children's poetry.

In his children's poems, Blake has true simplicity to a remarkable degree. He never deals with the complicated; his emotions are elemental, primordial. Moreover, his expression is as simple as the thought, as it needs must be in all real literature. “The great artist is the simplifier,” says Amiel.

Sir Joshua Reynolds once told Blake that he should paint with less extravagance and more simplicity. Perhaps that criticism of Blake's *painting* was just, though Blake bitterly

resented it; it is not at all just with regard to his *writing*, —at least in his children's poetry. Of course, Blake was "of imagination all compact"; but he "*bodies forth the forms of things unknown*" concretely, graphically.

For Blake was a painter as well as a poet, and most of his poems are full of pictures: colors, forms, outlines, grouping, all distinct and clear-cut. Observe in the following poems how vivid are the pictures.

LAUGHING SONG

When the green woods laugh with the voice of joy,
And the dimpling stream runs laughing by;
When the air does laugh with our merry wit,
And the green hill laughs with the noise of it;

When the meadows laugh with lively green,
And the grasshopper laughs in the lively scene;
When Mary and Susan and Emily
With their sweet round mouths sing "Ha ha he!"

When the painted birds laugh in the shade,
Where our table with cherries and nuts is spread;
Come live, and be merry, and join with me,
To sing the sweet chorus of "Ha ha he!"

THE ECHOING GREEN

The sun does arise
And make happy the skies;
The merry bells ring,
To welcome the Spring;
The skylark and thrush,
The birds of the bush,
Sing louder around
To the bells' cheerful sound;
While our sports shall be seen
On the echoing green.

Old John, with white hair,
Does laugh away care,
Sitting under the oak,
Among the old folk.
They laugh at our play,
And soon they all say,
“Such, such were the joys
When we all—girls and boys—
In our youth-time were seen
On the echoing green.”

Till the little ones, weary,
No more can be merry:
The sun does descend,
And our sports have an end.
Round the laps of their mothers
Many sisters and brothers,
Like birds in their nest,
Are ready for rest,
And sport no more seen
On the darkening green.

I have spoken of Blake's imagination, but perhaps I should recur to it for a moment, as this is one of Blake's predominant qualities. Of imagination Blake had much to say. He expresses himself with characteristic vigor: “He who does not imagine in stronger and better lineaments and in stronger and better light than his perishing mortal eye can see, does not imagine at all.” Blake is the most imaginative of all children's poets. In the following poem note the central concept of the angels hovering about to make sure that all innocent and helpless beings are safe for the night; note the comparison of the moon to a flower, in the first stanza, a comparison which is not injured in the least by the statement that this flower “Sits and smiles on the night”; note the remarkable figure in the last two lines of the poem,

"They *pour sleep*," the most imaginative metaphor in the whole range of children's poetry, suggesting, as it does, both the anointing of one's head with oil and the beautiful rite of baptism.

NIGHT

The sun descending in the west,
The evening star does shine;
The birds are silent in their nest,
And I must seek for mine.
The moon, like a flower
In heaven's high bower,
With silent delight,
Sits and smiles on the night.

Farewell, green field and happy grove,
Where flocks have ta'en delight.
Where lambs have nibbled, silent move
The feet of angels bright.
Unseen, they pour blessing,
And joy without ceasing,
On each bud and blossom,
And each sleeping bosom.

They look in every thoughtless nest
Where birds are covered warm;
They visit caves of every beast,
To keep them all from harm;
If they see any weeping
That should have been sleeping,
They pour sleep on their head,
And sit down by their bed.

In the well-known poem that follows note both the daring of the imagination and the picture-like clarity of the phrases. (I quote the poem as it appears in Alexander Gilchrist's *Life*; the emendations, apparently made on Blake's authority, are decided improvements over the original version, in *Songs of Experience*.)

THE TIGER

Tiger, tiger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Framed thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burned that fire within thine eyes?
On what wings dared he aspire?
What the hand dared seize the fire?

And what shoulder and what art
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
When thy dread heart began to beat,
What dread hand formed thy dread feet?

What the hammer, what the chain,
Knit thy strength and forged thy brain?
What the anvil? What dread grasp
Dared thy deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did He smile his work to see?
Did He who made the lamb make thee?

Tiger, tiger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dared frame thy fearful symmetry?

But there are no tigers in *Songs of Innocence*. The child on the cloud wishes to hear a song about a lamb, and the lamb, obedient little animal, duly appears in most of the songs in *Innocence*. meekest, mildest, most appealing of all creatures, it fitly symbolizes the innocence and purity of childhood. All the poems in this first series are suffused

with a tender, delicate sympathy with children, a full recognition of their sweetness, their lovableness, their kinship with everything that is beautiful. It is a charming, happy atmosphere in which the children of these verses live; it is a joyful, idyllic existence they lead. Of course, this is too ethereal, too idealistic, too transcendental. Children are not the meek and lamb-like beings they are pictured in *Songs of Innocence*, nor would any one desire to nourish children entirely upon this kind of poetry. But this is William Blake's chief contribution to children's poetry, and it is a contribution as distinctive and as notable as Robert Louis Stevenson's wistful, winsome little boy, Christina Rossetti's delicate little girl, or Mrs. Richards' family of rollicking youngsters. If Blake's poems are not absolutely true to child life in general, they are nevertheless clear visions of one phase of child life, and they are among the most exquisite lyrics in the children's anthology.

This is W. M. Rossetti's penetrating analysis of Blake: "Some of the little poems included in this series are the most perfect expression ever given (so far as I know) to babe-life—to what a man can remember of himself as an infant, or can enter into as existing in other infants, or can love as of the essence of infancy."

A dainty edition of *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*, in one volume, is issued by G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York.

SELECTIONS FROM WILLIAM BLAKE

INTRODUCTION

Piping down the valleys wild,
Piping songs of pleasant glee,
On a cloud I saw a child,
And he laughing said to me:

“Pipe a song about a Lamb!”
So I piped with merry cheer.
“Piper, pipe that song again”;
So I piped: he wept to hear.

“Drop thy pipe, thy happy pipe;
Sing thy songs of happy cheer!”
So I sang the same again,
While he wept with joy to hear.

“Piper, sit thee down and write
In a book that all may read.”
So he vanished from my sight;
And I plucked a hollow reed,

And I made a rural pen,
And I stained the water clear,
And I wrote my happy songs
Every child may joy to hear.

THE LAMB

Little lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee,
Gave thee life, and bid thee feed
By the stream and o’er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing, woolly, bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice?
Little lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?

Little lamb, I'll tell thee;
 Little lamb, I'll tell thee:
 He is callèd by thy name,
 For He calls Himself a Lamb.
 He is meek, and He is mild,
 He became a little child.
 I a child, and thou a lamb,
 We are callèd by his name.
 Little lamb, God bless thee!
 Little lamb, God bless thee!

INFANT JOY

"I have no name;
 I am but two days old."
 What shall I call thee?
 "I happy am,
 Joy is my name."
 Sweet joy befall thee!

Pretty joy!
 Sweet joy but two days old.
 Sweet joy I call thee!
 Thou dost smile,
 I sing the while;
 Sweet joy befall thee!

SPRING

Sound the flute!
 Now it's mute!
 Birds delight,
 Day and night,
 Nightingale,
 In the dale,
 Lark in sky,—
 Merrily,
 Merrily, merrily to welcome in the year.

Little boy,
Full of joy,
Little girl,
Sweet and small;
Cock does crow,
So do you;
Merry voice,
Infant noise,
Merrily, merrily we welcome in the year.

Little lamb,
Here I am;
Come and lick
My white neck;
Let me pull
Your soft wool;
Let me kiss
Your soft face;
Merrily, merrily we welcome in the year.

A CRADLE SONG

Sweet dreams, form a shade
O'er my lovely infant's head!
Sweet dreams of pleasant streams
By happy, silent, moony beams!

Sweet Sleep, with soft down
Weave thy brows an infant crown!
Sweet Sleep, angel mild,
Hover o'er my happy child!

Sweet smiles, in the night
Hover over my delight!
Sweet smiles, mother's smiles,
All the livelong night beguiles.

Sweet moans, dovelike sighs,
Chase not slumber from thine eyes!
Sweet moans, sweeter smiles,
All the dovelike moans beguiles.

Sleep, sleep, happy child!
All creation slept and smiled.
Sleep, sleep, happy sleep,
While o'er thee thy mother weep.

Sweet babe, in thy face
Holy image I can trace;
Sweet babe, once like thee
Thy Maker lay, and wept for me:

Wept for me, for thee, for all,
When He was an infant small.
Thou His image ever see,
Heavenly face that smiles on thee!

Smiles on thee, on me, on all,
Who became an infant small;
Infant smiles are his own smiles;
Heaven and earth to peace beguiles.

THE LITTLE BOY LOST

"Father, father, where are you going?
O do not walk so fast!
Speak, father, speak to your little boy,
Or else I shall be lost."

The night was dark, no father was there,
The child was wet with dew;
The mire was deep, and the child did weep,
And away the vapor flew.

THE LITTLE BOY FOUND

The little boy lost in the lonely fen,
Led by the wandering light,
Began to cry, but God, ever nigh,
Appeared like his father, in white.

He kissed the child, and by the hand led,
And to his mother brought,

Who in sorrow pale, through the lonely dale,
Her little boy weeping sought.

THE SHEPHERD

How sweet is the shepherd's sweet lot!
From the morn to the evening he strays;
He shall follow his sheep all the day,
And his tongue shall be fillèd with praise.

For he hears the lambs' innocent call,
And he hears the ewes' tender reply;
He is watchful while they are in peace,
For they know when their shepherd is nigh.

ON ANOTHER'S SORROW

Can I see another's woe,
And not be in sorrow too?
Can I see another's grief,
And not seek for kind relief?

Can I see a falling tear,
And not feel my sorrow's share?
Can a father see his child
Weep, nor be with sorrow filled?

Can a mother sit and hear
An infant groan, an infant fear?
No, no! never can it be!
Never, never can it be!

And can He who smiles on all
Hear the wren with sorrows small,
Hear the small bird's grief and care,
Hear the woes that infants bear—

And not sit beside the nest,
Pouring pity in their breast,
And not sit the cradle near,
Weeping tear on infant's tear?

And not sit both night and day,
Wiping all our tears away?
O no! never can it be!
Never, never can it be!

He doth give His joy to all:
He becomes an infant small,
He becomes a man of woe,
He doth feel the sorrow too.

Think not thou canst sigh a sigh,
And thy Maker is not by:
Think not thou canst weep a tear,
And thy Maker is not near.

O He gives to us His joy,
That our grief He may destroy:
Till our grief is fled and gone
He doth sit by us and moan.

CHAPTER SIX

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI was a daughter of Gabriele and Frances (Polidore) Rossetti. As the name implies, the Rossetti family was of Italian origin. Gabriele Rossetti, a man of great learning and ability, was a native of the kingdom of Naples, who had come to England as a political exile in 1824. There he married Frances, daughter of an Italian gentleman named Gaetano Polidore. Christina Rossetti, their youngest child, was born at London in 1830. As she grew up, she developed a strange and wistful beauty. 'Lovely' seems to be the adjective that best describes her.

As a child Christina was often taken to the country for visits to friends and relatives, but when she was about seven or eight years old these visits came to an end and thereafter, for a long period of her life, she was a prisoner of the city streets and windows. For such a singer as Christina Rossetti one could have wished the close companionship of country earth and flowers and sky. She should early have known the wild Highland glens, the Yorkshire moors, and the English lakes. She should have been translated to the soft coast of Devon or carried back to the clear skies of Italy.

Christina began to write early, her first verses having been composed at the age of ten years. Beginning thus early, our poet wrote continuously during the greater part of her life, and the collected edition of her poems contains no fewer than nine hundred and ninety-six titles.

During her lifetime, Miss Rossetti published six volumes, one of which, *Sing-Song*, a book of nursery rhymes, is

children's poetry pure and simple. The *Sing-Song* poems were dedicated to "the baby who suggested them"—the little son of Professor Arthur Cayley of Cambridge University—and are particularly suitable for little children. In the whole realm of children's literature, it would be difficult to find a book more charming. The very titles are full of poetic thought and wonder, from *Twist me a crown of wind-flowers*, to *Hope is like a harebell trembling from its birth*. It was published by Routledge (now Macmillan) in 1872, with more than one hundred illustrations by Arthur Hughes.

Her best poem, the one which will hold her fame secure, is *Goblin Market*. This poem is a fairy tale, concerning two sisters, and was dedicated by the poet to her own sister, Maria. It is a poem which may be read by children. It is full of jangling sounds, gorgeous color, and dramatic action. Once read, the opening lines can never be forgotten.

Morning and evening
Maids hear the goblins cry:
"Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy:
Apples and quinces,
Lemons and oranges,
Plump unpecked cherries.
Melons and raspberries,
Bloom-down-cheeked peaches,
Swart-headed mulberries,
Wild free-born cranberries,
Crab-apples, dewberries,
Pine-apples, blackberries,
Apricots, strawberries;—
All ripe together
In summer weather,—
Morns that pass by,
Fair eves that fly;
Come buy, come buy:

Our grapes fresh from the vine,
Pomegranates full and fine,
Dates and sharp bullaces,
Rare pears and greengages,
Damsons and bilberries,
Taste them and try:
Currants and gooseberries,
Bright-fire-like barberries,
Figs to fill your mouth,
Citrons from the South,
Sweet to tongue and sound to eye;
Come buy, come buy."

In addition to *Goblin Market* and the poems in *Sing-Song*, Miss Rossetti wrote many other poems that are suitable for little folks. Her brother William selected thirty of these, but even he did not select them all. One could wish that all of her poetry for children could be freed from the general collection of her works and published in one volume. Such a book would contain *Goblin Market*; all the poems in *Sing-Song*; the thirty poems selected by William Rossetti, and as many others as might be found. It would include *Summer*; the series of *Valentines to My Mother*; *A Christmas Carol (For my Godchildren)*; *A Royal Princess*; and *Eleanor*.

Miss Rossetti suffered greatly from ill-health and was for two years a helpless invalid. She never entirely recovered and, if she lived almost to the end of the allotted term of years, it was largely due to the fact that she led a life of great seclusion. She died at London in 1894.

I have written somewhat at length upon her life because there is no other way of understanding the nature and quality of her poetry for children. Now let us look into this poetry, limiting ourselves to the one collection, *Sing-Song*.

Christina Rossetti has written some of the most tender and

musical lullabies in literature. I quote but one; read it aloud and notice the exquisitely soft, limpid music.

Lullaby, oh, lullaby!
Flowers are closed and lambs are sleeping;
Lullaby, oh, lullaby!
Stars are up, the moon is peeping;
Lullaby, oh, lullaby!
While the birds are silence keeping,
Lullaby, oh, lullaby!
Sleep, my baby, fall a-sleeping,
Lullaby, oh, lullaby!

All her slumber-songs are full of such flute-like tones.

Nowadays we rule out of our poetry-books for children all poems on death or other somber themes, on the principle poetically expressed by Robert Greene:

Weep not, my wanton, *smile* upon my knee,
When thou art old there's grief enough for thee.

Now, I have no quarrel with the principle: doubtless it is sound. But I wonder if occasionally we should not do well to teach children some of the most beautiful dirges. It is, of course, impossible to hold the attention of the average little child to mournful thoughts, even if we so wished; but I see no reason why a few child-threnodies should not be allowed to sink into the porous young mind, in the belief that some day they will rise to the surface in a crystal, willow-fringed fountain. And Miss Rossetti's dirges are among the noblest in the language. She sings sincerely and naturally of death. Her poems on the death of children are almost invariably hopeful and consolatory, at least never morbid. One of the most beautiful in *Sing-Song* is this:

Sing me a song—
What shall I sing?—
Three merry sisters
Dancing in a ring,
Light and fleet upon their feet
As birds upon the wing.

Tell me a tale—
What shall I tell?—
Two mournful sisters,
And a tolling knell,
Tolling ding and tolling dong,
Ding dong bell.

It was Poe who declared that “the death of a beautiful woman is the most poetical topic in the world.” But surely the death of a little child is material quite as poetical—at least, it has been the theme and the incentive of some of the most beautiful poetry. If the child-dirge is simple in diction and thought, musical and suggestive in expression, and devoid of sentimentality and graveyard moralizing, as is the above poem, it may, without doubt, be offered to a child.

Another species of poetry we have sacrificed to appease the gods of pedagogy is the “moral,” the didactic. We are right in that, as a general principle. “Art’s perfect form no moral needs,” says Whittier. But childhood is pre-eminently the period of practicality, of concreteness, and the child readily assimilates what he regards as usable. It was Matthew Arnold who said that literature satisfies both the “sense of beauty” and the “sense of conduct.” Almost all great literature culminates not in the flower of beauty, but in the fruit of right-doing. Surely the gist of the whole question is the *manner* in which the ethical is expressed. If it is too obvious, or if it is too namby-pamby and Sunday-schoolish, the child will have none of it—and I, for one, do

not blame him. But if the moral is drawn by mere suggestion, by intimations, by figures of speech, if the children are led to make their own conclusions and discover the treasure trove of wisdom, then surely the so-called "moral" poetry is, pedagogically and psychologically, literature for children.

Now, Miss Rossetti's collection contains a number of excellent poems of this type, not at all in the Jane and Ann Taylor style. I shall simply quote two from *Sing-Song* and let them justify themselves.

An emerald is as green as grass;
A ruby red as blood;
A sapphire shines as blue as heaven;
A flint lies in the mud.

A diamond is a brilliant stone,
To catch the world's desire;
An opal holds a fiery spark;
But a flint holds fire.

A toadstool comes up in a night,—
Learn the lesson, little folk:—
An oak grows on a hundred years,
But then it is an oak.

Miss Rossetti does not sing much of the joys of play and of companionship. That the sensitive, precocious girl ever indulged in riotous play is very improbable. Perhaps she owned pet animals; indeed, she displays in her poems a tenderness for the humbler animals that reminds one of Robert Burns. She sings of flowers, too, especially of the rose; but they are usually cultivated flowers. It may be that she occasionally strayed beyond the cloistered precincts of her London garden; but when I read most of her lyrics, I see the English lady leaning from her study window—would

it be too extravagant to call them “magic casements”?—gazing down at the garden or up at the stars, or I see her pacing decorously among the flower-plots. But let us give thanks for what the gods send us. “’Tis a wide world, my masters; there is room for all”—room for a Byron and his love for Nature’s grandeur, room for a Christina Rossetti and her love for Nature’s delicate fineness. And let us give thanks especially for such poems as this is:

Growing in the vale,
By the uplands hilly,
Growing straight and frail,
Lady Daffadowndilly.

In a golden crown,
And a scant green gown
While the spring blows chilly,
Lady Daffydown,
Sweet Daffydowndilly.

Our poet makes frequent use of contrast, introducing the youthful reader to the unfamiliar by the road over which he has often traveled. The following well-known rainbow poem illustrates this device:

Boats sail on the rivers,
And ships sail on the seas;
But clouds that sail across the sky
Are prettier far than these.

There are bridges on the rivers,
As pretty as you please;
But the bow that bridges heaven,
And overtops the trees,
And builds a road from earth to sky,
Is prettier far than these.

Miss Rossetti, like her brother Dante Gabriel, shows

marvelous power in painting pictures with words. Here are two, from a number that might be quoted. Observe how clearly drawn the scenes are.

Rushes in a watery place,
And reeds in a hollow;
A soaring skylark in the sky,
A darting swallow;
And where pale blossoms used to hang
Ripe fruit to follow.

A frisky lamb
And a frisky child
Playing their pranks
In a cowslip meadow;
The sky all blue
And the air all mild
And the fields all sun
And the lanes half shadow.

Miss Rossetti rarely condescends to nonsense jingles. In truth, her poetry is seldom light-hearted and high-spirited, seldom freely and spontaneously joyous. Often its appeal is to the quiet, sensitive girl rather than to the prankish boy. But that the poet did have playful moods is attested by the following sprightly jingle, which old Mother Goose might well claim as hers:

Mix a pancake,
Stir a pancake,
Pop it in the pan;
Fry the pancake,
Toss the pancake,—
Catch it if you can.

Again, the grotesque humor of Mother Goose is seen in the following:

If a pig wore a wig,
What could we say?
Treat him as a gentleman,
And say "Good day."

If his tail chanced to fail,
What could we do?
Send him to the tailoress
To get one new.

And one can detect traces of Mother Goose in this:

What does the bee do?
Bring home honey.
And what does Father do?
Bring home money.
And what does Mother do?
Lay out the money.
And what does baby do?
Eat up the honey.

Sing-Song contains much fine poetry for children. It is sincere, tender, simple, imaginative, picturesque, musical; and it deals with childish themes in an artistic manner. The little volume has taken its proper place in my own affections, and it has its proper niche on my shelf of children's poetry—on the end opposite Mother Goose, Lewis Carroll, Edward Lear, and other jocund spirits, and just between Robert Louis Stevenson's *Child's Garden* and William Blake's *Songs of Innocence*.

SELECTIONS FROM CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

TO LALLA

Reading my Verses Topsy-Turvy

Darling little Cousin,
With your thoughtful look
Reading topsy-turvy
From a printed book.

English hieroglyphics,
More mysterious
To you than Egyptian
Ones would be to us;—

Leave off for a minute
Studying, and say
What is the impression
That those marks convey.

Only solemn silence
And a wondering smile:
But your eyes are lifted
Unto mine the while.

In their gaze so steady
I can surely trace
That a happy spirit
Lighteth up your face;

Tender happy spirit,
Innocent and pure,
Teaching more than science,
And than learning more.

How should I give answer
To that asking look?
Darling little Cousin,
Go back to your book.

Read on: if you knew it,
You have cause to boast:
You are much the wiser,
Though I know the most.

Fly away, fly away over the sea,
Sun-loving swallow, for summer is done;
Come again, come again, come back to me,
Bringing the summer and bringing the sun.

The lily has a smooth stalk,
Will never hurt your hand;
But the rose upon her briar
Is lady of the land.

There's sweetness in an apple tree,
And profit in the corn;
But lady of all beauty
Is a rose upon a thorn.

When with moss and honey
She tips her bending briar,
And half unfolds her glowing heart,
She sets the world on fire.

Hurt no living thing:
Ladybird, nor butterfly,
Nor moth with dusty wing,
Nor cricket chirping cheerily,
Nor grasshopper so light of leap,
Nor dancing gnat, nor beetle fat,
Nor harmless worms that creep.

A pocket handkerchief to hem—
Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear!
How many stitches it will take
Before it's done, I fear.

Yet set a stitch and then a stitch,
And stitch and stitch away,
Till stitch by stitch the hem is done—
And after work is play!

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

For my Godchildren

The Shepherds had an Angel,
The Wise Men had a star,
But what have I, a little child,
To guide me home from far,
Where glad stars sing together
And singing angels are?—

Lord Jesus is my Guardian,
So I can nothing lack:
The lambs lie in His bosom
Along life's dangerous track:
The wilful lambs that go astray
He bleeding fetches back.

Lord Jesus is my guiding star,
My beacon-light in heaven:
He leads me step by step along
The path of life uneven:
He, true light, leads me to that land
Whose day shall be as seven.

Those Shepherds through the lonely night
Sat watching by their sheep,
Until they saw the heavenly host
Who neither tire nor sleep,
All singing "Glory, glory"
In festival they keep.

Christ watches me, His little lamb,
Cares for me day and night,
That I may be His own in heaven:
So angels clad in white

Shall sing their "Glory, glory"
For my sake in the height.

The Wise Men left their country
To journey morn by morn,
With gold and frankincense and myrrh,
Because the Lord was born:
God sent a star to guide them
And sent a dream to warn.

My life is like their journey,
Their star is like God's book;
I must be like those good Wise Men
With heavenward heart and look:
But shall I give no gifts to God?—
What precious gifts they took!

Lord, I will give my love to Thee,
Than gold much costlier,
Sweeter to Thee than frankincense,
More prized than choicest myrrh:
Lord, make me dearer day by day,
Day by day holier;

Nearer and dearer day by day:
Till I my voice unite,
And sing my "Glory, glory"
With angels clad in white;
All "Glory, glory" given to Thee
Through all the heavenly height.

In the meadow—what in the meadow?
Bluebells, buttercups, meadowsweet,
And fairy rings for the children's feet
In the meadow.

In the garden—what in the garden?
Jacob's-ladder and Solomon's-seal,
And Love-lies-bleeding beside All-heal
In the garden.

Stroke a flint, and there is nothing to admire:
Strike a flint, and forthwith flash out sparks of fire.

The horses of the sea
Rear a foaming crest,
But the horses of the land
Serve us the best.

The horses of the land
Munch corn and clover,
While the foaming sea-horses
Toss and turn over.

Who has seen the wind?
Neither I nor you:
But when the leaves hang trembling
The wind is passing thro'.

Who has seen the wind?
Neither you nor I:
But when the trees bow down their heads
The wind is passing by.

If all were rain and never sun,
No bow could span the hill;
If all were sun and never rain,
There'd be no rainbow still.

Hope is like a harebell trembling from its birth,
Love is like a rose the joy of all the earth;
Faith is like a lily lifted high and white,
Love is like a lovely rose the world's delight;
Harebells and sweet lilies show a thornless growth,
But the rose with all its thorns excels them both.

CHAPTER SEVEN

WALTER DE LA MARE

AMONG the younger English writers who have made their mark during the past twenty years, Mr. Walter de la Mare is the only notable children's poet. His first published book of poems was a series called *Songs of Childhood*, which appeared in 1901, six years before his *Poems*. Eleven years after *Songs of Childhood* appeared a tiny volume called *A Child's Day*, which was republished in 1920, and *Peacock Pie*, which has proved to be the most widely known of his books for children. In 1922 *Down-Adown-Derry* was published, a collection of fairy poems. These four volumes, together with a group of nine poems entitled *Memories of Childhood*, in *Poems*, 1906, make up a body of verse for children and about children unsurpassed in amount by any lyricist, and unequalled in fineness of texture, in delicacy of feeling, in sweetness of tone, and in vigor of imagination by any contemporary poet of childhood.

Mr. de la Mare has been so often likened to other children's poets that we cannot avoid comparisons. "He is the modern Blake," says one enthusiast. He is like Blake at times. Blake would have delighted in such a poem as *Bread and Cherries*, for example, or *The Horn*, or *The Quartette*, or *Sooeep*, or this exquisite song:

THE BUCKLE

I had a silver buckle,
I sewed it on my shoe,
And 'neath a sprig of mistletoe
I danced the evening through.

I had a bunch of cowslips,
 I hid them in a grot,
 In case the elves should come by night
 And me remember not.

I had a yellow riband,
 I tied it in my hair,
 That, walking in the garden,
 The birds might see it there.

I had a secret laughter,
 I laughed it near the wall:
 Only the ivy and the wind
 May tell of it at all.

This is precisely such a theme as William Blake might have chosen; it voices Blake's sad-sweet music, it has the atmosphere which Blake loved and lived in, and at the same time has the splendid pictorial quality of Blake. Yes, Mr. de la Mare reminds one of Blake.

Other critics find him reminiscent of Robert Louis Stevenson. Yes, he is somewhat like Stevenson, Stevenson of the *Child's Garden*. Mr. de la Mare's "child in the story" resembles the imaginative, solitary little boy in the *Garden*. Like R. L. S's child, he plays by himself, and his play is of the same fanciful, make-believe nature. The following, for instance: would it surprise any one to come across it in the *Child's Garden*? In theme, in mood, in form, almost in phrasing, this is veritable Robert Louis:

THE MASSACRE

The shadow of a poplar tree
 Lay in that lake of sun,
 As I with my little sword went in—
 Against a thousand, one.

Haughty and infinitely armed,
Insolent in their wrath,
Plumed high with purple plumes they held
The narrow meadow path.

The air was sultry; all was still;
The sun like flashing glass;
And snip-snap my light-whispering steel
In arcs of light did pass.

Lightly and dull fell each proud head,
Spiked keen without avail,
Till swam my uncontented blade
With ichor green and pale.

And silence fell: the rushing sun
Stood still in paths of heat,
Gazing in waves of horror on
The dead about my feet.

Never a whir of wing, no bee
Stirred o'er the shameful slain;
Nought but a thirsty wasp crept in,
Stooped, and came out again.

The very air trembled in fear;
Eclipsing shadow seemed
Rising in crimson waves of gloom—
On one who dreamed.

Stevenson, to be sure, would not have written those splendid lines:

Haughty and infinitely armed,
Insolent in their wrath.

Mr. de la Mare's child owns an imagination more vigorous, stronger for daring and lofty flights than Stevenson's.

The two poets are alike in another way: both have explored thoroughly that enchanted region known to travelers as

the Land of Counterpane. Not that the child of the later poet must lie sick abed, as poor Louis had to do. Like a dutiful twentieth century boy he takes his afternoon nap—sitting at the window!

THE WINDOW

Behind the blinds I sit and watch
The people passing—passing by;
And not a single one can see
My tiny watching eye.

They cannot see my little room,
All yellowed with the shaded sun;
They do not even know I am here;
Nor guess when I am gone.

But it is in that witching hour before he has dropped off to sleep, when the sounds and sights and odors of night are most provocative—it is then that Mr. de la Mare's little boy is most a poet.

FULL MOON

One night as Dick lay half asleep,
Into his drowsy eyes
A great still light began to creep
From out the silent skies.

It was the lovely moon's, for when
He raised his dreamy head,
Her surge of silver filled the pane
And streamed across his bed.

So, for awhile, each gazed at each—
Dick and the solemn moon—
Till, climbing slowly on her way,
She vanished, and was gone.

Never was child so enamored of the moon, so entangled in its beams, and never was poet who sang so delightfully of its magic and majesty.

Yes, Mr. de la Mare *is* like Stevenson. But Stevenson sticks pretty close to earth and the homely things of earth, though, needless to say, he elevates and transfigures all he touches. There is more of the mysterious, more of the supernal and the supernatural, and a wider, wilder sweep of the imagination in Mr. de la Mare. Yet who could tell which of the two poets wrote this?

THE HORSEMAN

I heard a horseman
Ride over the hill;
The moon shone clear,
The night was still;
His helm was silver,
And pale was he;
And the horse he rode
Was of ivory.

And at times Mr. de la Mare resembles Christina Rossetti—not so much in form or in theme as in a certain mood. The soft, subdued, plaintive strain is familiar to both. And both have the courage and the understanding to tell children now and then of the griefs and tragedies of life. In *The Pedlar*, in *The Miller and his Son*, in *Down-Adown-Derry*, in *Alulvan* (our poet has a genius for the creation of names of places and persons), Mr. de la Mare has chosen themes which would have appealed strongly to the author of *Goblin Market* and of the tremulous little dirges in *Sing-Song*. Here is one of the best of his poems in this manner.

THE SILVER PENNY

“Sailorman, I’ll give to you
My bright silver penny,
If out to sea you’ll sail me
And my dear sister Jenny.”

“Get in, young sir, I’ll sail ye
And your dear sister Jenny,
But pay she shall her golden locks
Instead of your penny.”

They sail away, they sail away,
O fierce the winds blew!
The foam flew in clouds,
And dark the night grew!

And all the wild sea-water
Climbed steep into the boat;
Back to the shore again
Sail they will not.

Drowned is the sailorman,
Drowned is sweet Jenny,
And drowned in the deep sea
A bright silver penny.

Note the climax in the last stanza, for climax it is from the child’s and the artist’s point of view. And note that in this poem, as in the other tragic pieces, it is not death in and of itself, not the undramatic death of a man or woman which is the theme: it is the romantic disappearance of children, a poetic taking-off shrouded in mystery and suggestive of supernatural agencies. When it is a matter of death in its familiar guise, Mr. de la Mare’s little child is not interested. Witness the following poem, *The Funeral*:

THE FUNERAL

They dressed us up in black,
 Susan and Tom and me—
 And, walking through the fields
 All beautiful to see,
 With branches high in the air
 And daisy and buttercup,
 We heard the lark in the clouds—
 In black dressed up.

They took us to the graves,
 Susan and Tom and me,
 Where the long grasses grow
 And the funeral tree:
 We stood and watched; and the wind
 Came softly out of the sky
 And blew in Susan's hair,
 As I stood close by.

Back through the fields we came,
 Susan and Tom and me,
 And we sat in the nursery together,
 And had our tea.
 And, looking out of the window,
 I heard the thrushes sing;
 But Tom fell asleep in his chair,
 He was so tired, poor thing.

Mr. de la Mare is also like Miss Rossetti in his delight in beautiful landscapes and ability to paint them. *The Rainbow* is such a picture; so is *Summer Evening*; so is this dainty thing:

CHICKEN

Clapping her platter stood plump Bess,
 And all across the green
 Came scampering in, on wing and claw,
 Chicken fat and lean:—

Dorking, Spaniard, Cochin China,
 Bantams sleek and small,
 Like feathers blown in a great wind,
 They came at Bessie's call.

But whereas Miss Rossetti's pictures are of nature in her cultivated and domesticated aspects, Mr. de la Mare's are oftentimes more descriptive of her wilder, fiercer phases.

But enough of resemblances! Walter de la Mare does resemble Blake and Stevenson and Christina Rossetti; but this is tantamount to saying that he has a varied repertoire, that he writes on many subjects, in many keys, in many styles. He resembles other poets, but most of all he resembles himself. His lyric power, his understanding of child life, his pictorial pen are his own, by virtue of what he is. Had the others never lived, he would have written in virtually the way he has written.

In two other fields, besides those spoken of, has Mr. de la Mare gleaned and garnered. One of these is in the field of the grotesque and the humoresque. His poems in this vein are sometimes based upon the naïveté of children: *The Bandog*, for example.

THE BANDOG

Has anybody seen my Mopser?—
 A comely dog is he,
 With hair of the color of a Charles the Fifth
 And teeth like ships at sea.
 His tail it curls straight upwards,
 His ears stand two abreast,
 And he answers to the simple name of Mopser,
 When civilly addressed.

Sometimes it is sheer grotesquerie, as in the following:

ALAS, ALACK!

Ann, Ann!
Come! quick as you can!
There's a fish that *talks*
In the frying-pan.
Out of the fat,
As clear as glass,
He put up his mouth
And moaned "Alas!"
Oh, most mournful,
"Alas, alack!"
Then turned to his sizzling,
And sank him back.

Sometimes it is a Lear-like *jeu d'esprit*,—for instance, *The Ship of Rio*, of which

Nine and ninety monkeys
Were all her jovial crew.

Sometimes it is a puzzling, haunting, sense-or-nonsense, Lewis-Carroll skit like that of the unfortunate Jim Jay, who

Got stuck fast
In yesterday;

or an extravaganza like *The Lost Shoe* or *Off the Ground*—this last almost worthy to be placed beside that other travelogue, *John Gilpin's Ride*. Mr. de la Mare's vein of humor is genuine and rich; it outcrops occasionally in unexpected spots; and, best of all, it is humor of that strong-flavored robustness beloved of all children of the children of Adam.

But it is in the poetry of the supernatural that Mr. de la Mare makes his most original and delightful contribution to the children's anthology. Here he is undisputed master. His poems in this *genre* range all the way from those con-

taining the slightest Hawthornesque touch of the magical and mysterious to those dealing frankly and undisguisedly with denizens of the under- and upper-world.

In *Sleepyhead* the child hears a "faint singing in the wood"—the gnomes are calling him; but when he goes to seek them out, he can find only a robin. In *Bluebells* he spies fairies in a ring, but, as he approaches, they vanish into thin air. As he sits under the mistletoe, all alone, some one comes and kisses him.

No footsteps came, no voice, but only,
Just as I sat there, sleepy, lonely,
Stooped in the still and shadowy air
Lips unseen—and kissed me there.

In *Some One*,

Some one came knocking
At my wee, small door;
Some one came knocking,
I'm sure—sure—sure.

But when the little boy opens the door, he can hear nothing but the busy beetle, the screech-owl, and the cricket. In *Sam*, as he leans from his window casement in the moonlight, he sees a mermaid and hears her calling him.

Wonderful lovely there she sat,
Singing the night away,
All in the solitudinous sea
Of that there lonely bay.

He walks past *The Old Stone House* on tiptoe, for well he knows

A friendless face is peering, and a clear still eye
Peeps closely through the casement as my step goes by.

One of the most charming of the poems in this style is this:

THE LITTLE GREEN ORCHARD

Some one is always sitting there,
 In the little green orchard;
Even when the sun is high
In noon's unclouded sky,
And faintly droning goes
The bee from rose to rose,
Some one in shadow is sitting there,
 In the little green orchard.

Yes, and when twilight is falling softly
 In the little green orchard;
When the gray dew distils
And every flower-cup fills;
When the last blackbird says,
 "What—what!" and goes her way—s-sh!
I have heard voices calling softly
 In the little green orchard.

Not that I am afraid of being there,
 In the little green orchard;
Why, when the moon's been bright,
Shedding her lonesome light,
And moths like ghosties come,
And the horned snail leaves home:
I've sat there, whispering and listening there,
 In the little green orchard.

Only it's strange to be feeling there,
 In the little green orchard;
Whether you paint or draw,
Dig, hammer, chop, or saw;
When you are most alone,
All but the silence gone. . .
Some one is watching and waiting there,
 In the little green orchard.

But not always are the fairy folk so dimly descried. Sometimes they are seen quite plainly indeed, as in *The Fairies Dancing*, in *Arroar*, and *The Mocking Fairy*. Some of the little people have names—melodious, fairy-like names they are—and their lives and adventures are told in detail. Such are the three dwarfs who lived in the *Isle of Lone*: Alliolyle, Lallerie, and Muziomone; such are Gimmul and Mel in *The Honey Robbers*; such is the dainty, Puck-like Melmillo. Sometimes the fairies, conducting themselves in strict accordance with the canons and traditions of their tribe, give help to mortals, as when, in *Berries*, the fairy shows old Jill where the choicest berries are to be found—Jill displaying her gratitude and her grounding in nursery lore by making a teeny-tiny pot of jelly for the little helper.

Our poet's other-wordly creatures are varied. He introduces his child-readers, in such poems as *I saw Three Witches* and *The Ride-by-Nights*, to some amiable, terrifying witches; he makes them acquainted with mischievous changelings, lorelies, dwarfs, ogres, pilgrim-besetting fiends, and ghosts—many ghosts. There is the ghost of a hound in *The Gage*. There is the ghost of a girl in *The Phantom*—such a gentle, friendly, wistful little wraith, so much more companionable than a fairy that Ann lays her fairy book aside to muse upon the apparition. And there are a number of ghost-ridden houses. *Alulvan* is one of these, so is the house in *Haunted*, and *The Old Stone House* and *The Ruin*. These are not so fearful, because one can avoid such spots—perhaps. But when in *The Ogre* a misshapen giant creeps in the dead of night up to a cottage where two little children are sleeping and stretches out his horrible hairy hands to clutch them—then it is high time to scream. He is balked of his prey, however, for the mother utters, in the nick of time, the sacred name;

And like a ravenous beast which sees
 The hunter's icy eye,
 So did this wretch in wrath confess
 Sweet Jesu's mastery.

Lightly he drew his greedy thumb
 From out that casement pale,
 And strode, enormous, swiftly home,
 Whinnying down the dale.

Mr. de la Mare takes his wolves and his witches and ghosts seriously. Here is no foolery, no drollery, no light-hearted trafficking with jovial goblins of the brood of which Eugene Field and James Whitcomb Riley tell us. And if, now and then, he frightens his child-hearers, as any understanding friend of children will do occasionally—what then? For a normal child there is nothing so delightful and so desirable as an occasional fright-poem or horror-story—of the right quality, which means of the artistic quality.

At any rate, Mr. de la Mare as man and poet is a frequenter of that marchland, that "bateable" country dividing the normal and natural from the abnormal and supernatural. It is in his blood, blood enriched with a strong Celtic strain. And his best poetry, whether for children or for men and women, is sad poetry. Keen delight in beauty and deep sadness at thought of its impermanence is as characteristic of him as of his friend Rupert Brooke or of that fine lyric poet, Robert Herrick, with whom Mr. de la Mare has close poetic kinship. Leaf through his poems and see how many of them are interfused with the poignantly sweet unintelligible and incommunicable mysteriousness of life. It is to be found, sharpened to irony, in *Motley*; it is to be found, expressed in a dim allegory, in *Listeners*, this last one of the

greatest imaginative poems of our century. When, therefore, he writes weird, eerie, fairy-haunted verse for children, he is but allowing the current of his emotions to flow naturally down the channels of his nature, in obedience to the law of spiritual gravity. Here is no writing down to little tots, no selecting of themes and moods and diction for a special circle, no stultifying of his genius, and no disparagement of the understanding of his readers.

What special experience or what specific impulse moved Mr. de la Mare to write so much verse about and for children is unimportant. He has four children of his own; but this fact does not necessarily signify anything as to his verse. What does signify is his attitude toward children and childhood. This may be determined, of course, from his verse written for children, much of which has been herein quoted. It may be determined more accurately perhaps from a reading of his verse concerning children. One truth is easily discernible: he wishes the illusions of childhood, the bright web of fancy, to be undisturbed. This is what he means by *Reverie*.

REVERIE

Bring not bright candles, for his eyes
 In twilight have sweet company;
 Bring not bright candles, else they fly—
 His phantoms fly—
 Gazing aggrieved on thee!

* * * *

Bring not bright candles to those eyes
 That between earth and stars descry,
 Lovelier for the shadows there,
 Children of air,
 Palaces in the sky!

The child's world, according to our poet, is wonderfully rich and romantic, and he must be left to explore it unmolested.

And our poet realizes, as only a poet can, how swiftly the shades of the prison house close in upon the child, and the realization saddens him, as one more illustration of the unabiding quality of beauty. This is the theme of *Foreboding*, of which I quote the first two stanzas.

Thou canst not see him standing by—
Time—with a popped hand
Stealing thy youth's simplicity,
Even as falls unceasingly
His waning sand.

He will pluck thy childish roses, as
Summer from her bush
Strips all the loveliness that was;
Even to the silence evening has
Thy laughter hush.

This is William Blake again, with his *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*, but Blake with less bitterness, with more acquiescence in the natural order of things.

Only occasionally does Mr. de la Mare show the paternal attitude toward children. He has written only one lullaby—a tender, lovely one, however, beginning

Sleep, sleep, lovely white soul.

It is the mystic, romantic phase of childhood which appeals most to Mr. de la Mare: this is his fundamental point of view, this is his coign of vantage from which he sees child life. But—let this be made clear—most of his verse is *for* children. He has the rare power of stealing back to child-

hood, of recalling the universe as it appeared to him as a child, an unusually imaginative child, perhaps, but a child, with a child's power to create a world out of its own fancies.

Innocent children out of nought
Build up a universe of thought.

As to our poet's lyric power, what remains to say or how say it? It cannot be defined, it cannot even be described: it can only be illustrated. Mr. Conrad Aiken, poet and critic, has said: "It is doubtful whether any other living American or English poet can weave simple melody as deftly as Mr. de la Mare." It is "simple," it is "melody," it is very "deftly woven"—and not much remains to be said. Mr. de la Mare's verse has a liquid, lucid, singing quality; perhaps it is at times a bit too plaintive, but it is always free on the one hand from harshness and on the other from the sirupy-sweet lyricism of the sentimentalists. His diction is both robust and graceful, he unites words skillfully in melodious and original combinations. I am acquainted with no modern poets and few earlier ones who have his command over the movements of verse, the *accelerandos*, the *ritardos*, the holds and pauses, all the devices to create variety in unity, to wed the sense and the sound happily. Perhaps Mr. de la Mare, however far aloof he has held himself from the camp of the free-verse poets, has been influenced, in spite of himself, by their principles, and then has proceeded to surpass them in their practices. At any rate, he is one of the most charming writers of verse now living.

The greater part of Mr. de la Mare's poetry for children is to be found in his authorized *Collected Poems*, Holt, 1920. *Peacock Pie* is published separately by Henry Holt and

Company in two editions, one with illustrations by Mr. W. Heath Robinson, the other with illustrations by Mr. Claud Lovat Fraser. The verses in *A Child's Day* are not included in the *Collected Poems*, but are published in a separate little illustrated volume by Holt. The collection called *Down-Adown-Derry: Fairy Poems*, with illustrations by Miss Dorothy Lathrop, also is published by Henry Holt and Company.

SELECTIONS FROM WALTER DE LA MARE

THE HUNTSMEN

Three jolly gentlemen,
In coats of red,
Rode their horses
Up to bed.

Three jolly gentlemen
Snored till morn,
Their horses champing
The golden corn.

Three jolly gentlemen
At break of day,
Came clitter-clatter down the stairs
And galloped away.

THE QUARTETTE

Tom sang for joy and Ned sang for joy and old Sam sang for joy;
All we four boys piped up loud, just like one boy;
And the ladies that sate with the Squire—their cheeks were all wet,
For the noise of the voice of us boys, when we sang our Quartette.

Tom he piped low and Ned he piped low and old Sam he piped low;
Into a sorrowful fall did our music flow;
And the ladies that sate with the Squire vowed they'd never forget
How the eyes of them cried for delight, when we sang our Quartette.

HIDE AND SEEK

Hide and seek, says the Wind,
In the shade of the woods;
Hide and seek, says the Moon,
To the hazel buds;

Hide and seek, says the Cloud,
Star on to star;
Hide and seek, says the Wave
At the harbor bar;
Hide and seek, say I
To myself, and step
Out of the dream of Wake
Into the dream of Sleep.

SILVER

Slowly, silently, now the moon
Walks the night in her silver shoon;
This way, and that, she peers, and sees
Silver fruit upon silver trees;
One by one the casements catch
Her beams beneath the silvery thatch;
Couched in his kennel, like a log,
With paws of silver sleeps the dog;
From their shadowy cote the white breasts peep
Of doves in silver-feathered sleep;
A harvest mouse goes scampering by,
With silver claws, and silver eye;
And moveless fish in the water gleam,
By silver reeds in a silver stream.

GRIM

Beside the blaze of forty fires
Giant Grim doth sit,
Roasting a thick-wooled mountain sheep
Upon an iron spit.
Above him wheels the winter sky,
Beneath him, fathoms deep,
Lies hidden in the valley mists
A village fast asleep—
Save for one restive hungry dog
That, snuffing toward the height,
Smells Grim's broiled supper-meat, and spies
His watch-fire twinkling bright.

THE SUPPER

A wolf he pricks with eyes of fire
Across the night's o'ercrusted snows.
 Seeking his prey,
 He pads his way
Where Jane benighted goes,
 Where Jane benighted goes.

He curdles the bleak air with ire,
Ruffling his hoary raiment through,
 And lo! he sees
 'Neath the trees
Where Jane's light footsteps go,
 Where Jane's light footsteps go.

No hound peals thus in wicked joy.
He snaps his muzzle in the snows,
 His five-clawed feet
 Do scamper fleet
Where Jane's bright lanthorn shows,
 Where Jane's bright lanthorn shows.

Now his greed's green doth gaze unseen
On a pure face of wilding rose,
 Her amber eyes
 In fear's surprise
Watch largely as she goes,
 Watch largely as she goes.

Salt wells his hunger in his jaws,
His lust it revels to and fro,
 Yet small beneath
 A soft voice saith,
"Jane shall in safety go,
 Jane shall in safety go."

He lurched as if a fiery lash
Had scourged his hide, and through and through

His furious eyes
O'erscanned the skies,
But nearer dared not go,
But nearer dared not go.

He reared like wild Bucephalus,
His fangs like spears in him uprose,
Even to the town
Jane's flitting gown
He grins on as he goes,
He grins on as he goes.

In fierce lament he howls amain,
He scampers, marveling in his throes
What brought him there
To sup on air,
While Jane unharmèd goes,
While Jane unharmèd goes.

THE UNIVERSE

I heard a little child beneath the stars
Talk as he ran along
To some sweet riddle in his mind that seemed
A-tiptoe into song.

In his dark eyes lay a wild universe,—
Wild forests, peaks, and crests;
Angels and fairies, giants, wolves, and he
Were that world's only guests.

Elsewhere was home and mother, his warm bed:—
Now, only God alone
Could, armed with all His power and wisdom, make
Earths richer than his own.

O Man!—thy dreams, thy passions, hopes, desires!—
He in his pity keep
A homely bed where love may lull a child's
Fond Universe asleep!

CHAPTER EIGHT

EDWARD LEAR

ONE morning about half a century ago an observant traveler breakfasting at the Certosa di Pesio in the maritime Alps might have witnessed a curious scene. Among the sprinkling of English-speaking visitors at the long narrow tables were a lady accompanied by her two daughters, one quite a little girl, and a benevolent old gentleman with a long white beard and very bright eyes. Seeing that the little girl was having trouble with her knife and fork, the old gentleman produced a piece of paper and a pencil and drew her a comical picture with a nonsense rhyme written below. Immediately he was identified as the delightful Mr. Lear whose first *Nonsense Book* many children already knew by heart.

The incident given above is narrated in *A Diplomatist's Wife In Many Lands* by Mrs. Hugh Fraser, who was the elder of the two girls. In the weeks that followed, the friendship that began at the breakfast table grew apace. For Daisy, the younger sister, many of the poems in Lear's second *Nonsense Book* were written. A bump on her head inspired him to write *The Uncareful Cow*. The manifold implements of the Italian table d'hôte inspired his *Manyforkia Spoonfolia*, and the general gayety gave rise to his justly celebrated *Recipes for Nonsense Cookery*. Every morning when Daisy came to breakfast she found on her plate a new gift from Mr. Lear, usually a colored sketch with an appropriate poem. Small wonder that his young friends loved him.

Lear's first book of nonsense contained this dedicatory

note: "To the great-grandchildren, grand-nephews and grand-nieces of Edward, thirteenth Earl of Derby, this book of drawings and verses (the greater part of which were originally made and composed for their parents) is dedicated." For it was while Lear was engaged in drawing the birds at the country seat of the Earl of Derby, where, as Lear says, "Children and mirth abounded," that the poet-artist was inspired to write his first nonsense verses. The second volume, Lear states, was "written at different times for different sets of children." All of his verse, we may be sure, was written for the direct and immediate amusement of specific children of the author's acquaintance. Presumably, only those poems which were successful in their purpose were preserved and printed. Does this fact not explain in part the appeal which the verses make to all children of all times and climes?

We are warned not to look for morals and "messages." "Nonsense, pure and absolute, has been my aim throughout"; so says the author—who really ought to know most about the matter. And it is as nonsense that the *Nonsense Books* have lived for three quarters of a century and will continue to live so long as the Muse of Amusement has power to waken the risibilities.

Edward Lear was born in 1812 and died in 1888. Two generations ago he was known to the world as a painter and a writer of travels, or, more precisely, as one who wrote books on travel and illustrated them with drawings of his own. (Read Tennyson's poem, *To E. L. on His Travels in Greece*, for a beautiful appreciation of Lear's work in this vein.) To this present generation Edward Lear is known only by his Nonsense Books. He published four volumes: *A Book of Nonsense*, 1846, containing only limericks;

Nonsense Songs, 1871, containing some of his choicest "songs," all of his prose nonsense, part of his Nonsense Botany, and part of his Nonsense Alphabets; *More Nonsense*, 1872, consisting of limericks, more Nonsense Botany, and Nonsense pictures with Nonsense descriptions; and *Laughable Lyrics*, 1877, consisting of Nonsense songs, some more Nonsense Botany, more Nonsense Alphabets, and, most nonsensical of all, some Nonsense music. These four volumes were illustrated by the author with drawings as grotesque as any Thackeray ever dared to produce; in fact, the pictures are quite as important as the verses, so that the two should never be separated. All four volumes have been published in one by Little, Brown and Company, with all the original drawings, and with an appropriate introduction from the London *Spectator*; it is a book that should be in every juvenile library.

The most to some faint meaning make pretense,
But Shadwell never deviates into sense,

wrote Dryden of Thomas Shadwell. "Never deviates into sense"—neither does Lear. He writes *non-sense*; unadulterated, simon-pure nonsense; amazing, extravagant, hilarious nonsense; topsy-turvy, upside-down, wrong-side-out nonsense; delightful nonsense; children's nonsense. Though he traveled to the ends of the earth, he never left the limits of the happy land of Blunder-Wonder-Wander. Therefore I shall not attempt to analyze and dissect: I shall quote. First, from the limericks.

There was an Old Man in a tree,
Who was horribly bored by a bee;
When they said, "Does it buzz?"

He replied, "Yes, it does!
It's a regular brute of a bee."

There was a Young Lady whose chin
Resembled the point of a pin;
So she had it made sharp,
And purchased a harp,
And played several tunes with her chin.

There was an Old Person whose habits
Induced him to feed upon rabbits;
When he'd eaten eighteen,
He turned perfectly green,
Upon which he relinquished those habits.

There was an Old Man of the Nile,
Who sharpened his nails with a file,
Till he cut off his thumbs,
And said calmly, "This comes
Of sharpening one's nails with a file."

There was an Old Man who said, "How
Shall I flee from this horrible cow?
I will sit on this stile,
And continue to smile,
Which may soften the heart of that cow."

There was an Old Man with a beard,
Who said, "It is just as I feared!—
Two Owls and a Hen,
Four Larks and a Wren
Have all built their nests in my beard."

There was an Old Person of Dean
Who dined on one pea, and one bean;
For he said, "More than that
Would make me too fat,"
That cautious old person of Dean.

There was an Old Man of Thames-Ditton,
Who called out for something to sit on;
But they brought him a hat,
And said, "Sit on that,
You abruptious old man of Thames-Ditton."

Lear is not the creator of the limerick, as has been claimed, but it was Lear that made it popular. The form suited to a "t" his quaint, nonsensical conceptions. And there is surely something in the limerick which makes it the ideal form for nonsense, particularly for children's nonsense. The unspeakable exaggeration in Lear's limericks, the sheer absurdity, the utter and unutterable nonsense, when accompanied by the crackle of the movement, are beyond praise. And when to all this is added the grotesqueness of the illustrations, it is irresistible.

The final line of the last limerick quoted above shows Lear's fondness for words coined in the mint of his own drollery. And Lear has as great a fondness for the high-sounding proper names as Milton—which illustrates the fact that it is only a step from the sublime to the ridiculous. But Lear has the advantage of Milton; whenever he fails to find in his atlas a suitable name, he invents one—in fact, he prefers that method. Here are some of them: Jelly Bo Lee, the Gromboolian Plain (those are in Chinan), the Chankly Bore, the Isles of Boshen, the Land of Gramble-Blamble, Lake Pipple-Popple. Our fun-maker is quite as skillful in inventing names for his plants and animals; in these days of nature study Lear could be used as a text in Unnatural Natural History, as Pliny and John Lyly were in the heyday of their popularity. But to quote again: here is one of his best "songs."

THE OWL AND THE PUSSY-CAT

The Owl and the Pussy-Cat went to sea
In a beautiful pea-green boat;
They took some honey, and plenty of money
Wrapped up in a five-pound note.
The Owl looked up to the stars above,
And sang to a small guitar,
“O lovely Pussy, O Pussy, my love,
What a beautiful Pussy you are,
You are!
You are!
What a beautiful Pussy you are!”

Pussy said to the Owl, “You elegant fowl,
How charmingly sweet you sing!
Oh! Let us be married; too long we have tarried:
But what shall we do for a ring?”
They sailed away, for a year and a day,
To the land where the bong-tree grows;
And there in a wood a Piggy-wig stood,
With a ring at the end of his nose,
His nose,
His nose,
With a ring at the end of his nose.

“Dear Pig, are you willing to sell for a shilling
Your ring?” Said the Piggy, “I will.”
So they took it away, and were married next day
By the Turkey who lives on the hill.
They dined on mince and slices of quince,
Which they ate with a runcible spoon;
And hand in hand, on the edge of the sand,
They danced in the light of the moon,
The moon,
The moon,
They danced in the light of the moon.

“Surely,” said John Ruskin, “the most beneficent and

innocent of all books yet produced is the *Book of Nonsense* with its carollary carols, inimitable and refreshing, and perfect in rhythm. I really don't know any author to whom I am half so grateful for my idle self as Edward Lear." "The devotion to nonsense, and enthusiasm about trifles," says William Hazlitt, "is one of the striking weaknesses and greatest happinesses of our nature." And if we cannot extract any enjoyment from the Nonsense Books, let us pass them over to the children; we can at least derive a vicarious pleasure in watching the children's fun-maker rouse the risibles of the little folks he loved. Certainly we can agree heartily with his own words—"How pleasant to know Mr. Lear!"

How pleasant to know Mr. Lear,
Who has written such volumes of stuff!
Some think him ill-tempered and queer,
But a few think him pleasant enough.

His mind is concrete and fastidious,
His nose is remarkably big;
His visage is more or less hideous,
His beard it resembles a wig.

He reads but he cannot speak Spanish,
He cannot abide ginger beer.
Ere the days of his pilgrimage vanish,
How pleasant to know Mr. Lear!

SELECTIONS FROM EDWARD LEAR

THE TABLE AND THE CHAIR

Said the Table to the Chair,
"You can hardly be aware
How I suffer from the heat
And from chilblains on my feet.
If we took a little walk,
We might have a little talk;
Pray let us take the air,"
Said the Table to the Chair.

Said the Chair to the Table,
"Now, you *know* we are not able:
How foolishly you talk,
When you know we *cannot walk!*"
Said the Table with a sigh,
"It can do no harm to try.
I've as many legs as you:
Why can't we walk on two?"

So they both went slowly down,
And walked about the town
With a cheerful bumpy sound
As they toddled round and round;
And everybody cried,
As they hastened to their side,
"See! the Table and the Chair
Have come out to take the air!"

But in going down an alley,
To a castle in a valley,
They completely lost their way,
And wandered all the day;
Till, to see them safely back,
They paid a Ducky-quack,
And a Beetle, and a Mouse,
Who took them to their house.

Then they whispered to each other,
"O delightful little brother,
What a lovely walk we've taken!
Let us dine on beans and bacon."
So the Ducky and the leetle
Brownny-Mousy and the Beetle
Dined, and danced upon their heads
Till they toddled to their beds.

THE QUANGLE WANGLE'S HAT

On the top of the Crumpetty Tree
The Quangle Wangle sat,
But his face you could not see,
On account of his Beaver Hat.
For his hat was a hundred and two feet wide,
With ribbons and bibbons on every side,
And bells, and buttons, and loops, and lace,
So that nobody ever could see the face
Of the Quangle Wangle Quee.

The Quangle Wangle said
To himself on the Crumpetty Tree,
"Jam, and jelly, and bread
Are the best of food for me!
For the longer I live on this Crumpetty Tree
The plainer than ever it seems to me
That very few people comè this way
And that life on the whole is far from gay!"
Said the Quangle Wangle Quee.

But there came to the Crumpetty Tree
Mr. and Mrs. Canary;
And they said, "Did you ever see
Any spot so charmingly airy?
May we build a nest on your lovely Hat?
Mr. Quangle Wangle, grant us that!
O please let us come and build a nest
Of whatever material suits you best,
Mr. Quangle Wangle Quee."

And besides, to the Crumpetty Tree
Came the Stork, the Duck, and the Owl;
The Snail and the Bumble-Bee,
The Frog and the Fimble Fowl
(The Fimble Fowl, with a corkscrew leg);
And all of them said, "We humbly beg
We may build our homes on your lovely Hat,—
Mr. Quangle Wangle, grant us that!
Mr. Quangle Wangle Quee."

And the Golden Grouse came there,
And the Pobble who has no toes,
And the small Olympian bear,
And the Dong with a luminous nose.
And the Blue Baboon who played the Flute,
And the Orient Calf from the Land of Tute,
And the Attery Squash, and the Bosky Bat,—
All came and built on the lovely Hat
Of the Quangle Wangle Quee.

And the Quangle Wangle said
To himself on the Crumpetty Tree,
"When all these creatures move
What a wonderful noise there'll be!"
And at night by the light of the Mulberry Moon
They danced to the Flute of the Blue Baboon,
On the broad green leaves of the Crumpetty Tree,
And all were as happy as happy could be,
With the Quangle Wangle Quee.

THE JUMBLIES

They went to sea in a sieve, they did;
In a sieve they went to sea:
In spite of all their friends could say,
On a winter's morn, on a stormy day,
In a sieve they went to sea.
And when the sieve turned round and round,
And every one cried, "You'll all be drowned!"
They called aloud, "Our sieve ain't big;

But we don't care a button, we don't care a fig:
In a sieve we'll go to sea!"
Far and few, far and few,
Are the lands where the Jumblies live;
Their heads are green and their hands are blue;
And they went to sea in a sieve.

They sailed away in a sieve, they did,
In a sieve they sailed so fast,
With only a beautiful pea-green veil
Tied with a ribbon by way of a sail,
To a small tobacco-pipe mast.
And every one said who saw them go,
"Oh! won't they soon be upset, you know?
For the sky is dark and the voyage is long,
And happen what may, it's extremely wrong
In a sieve to sail so fast."
Far and few, far and few,
Are the lands where the Jumblies live;
Their heads are green and their hands are blue;
And they went to sea in a sieve.

The water it soon came in, it did:
The water it soon came in:
So, to keep them dry, they wrapped their feet
In a pinky paper all folded neat;
And they fastened it down with a pin.
And they passed the night in a crockery-jar:
And each of them said, "How wise we are!
Though the sky be dark, and the voyage be long,
Yet we never can think we were rash or wrong,
While round in our sieve we spin."
Far and few, far and few,
Are the lands where the Jumblies live;
Their heads are green and their hands are blue;
And they went to sea in a sieve.

And all night long they sailed away;
And when the sun went down,
They whistled and warbled a moony song

To the echoing sound of a coppery gong,
In the shade of the mountains brown.
"O Timballoo! How happy we are
When we live in a sieve and a crockery-jar!
And all night long, in the moonlight pale,
We sail away with a pea-green sail
In the shade of the mountains brown."

Far and few, far and few,
Are the lands where the Jumblies live;
Their heads are green and their hands are blue;
And they went to sea in a sieve.

They sailed to the Western Sea, they did,—
To a land all covered with trees:
And they bought an owl and a useful cart,
And a pound of rice, and a cranberry-tart,
And a hive of silvery bees;
And they bought a pig, and some green jackdaws,
And a lovely monkey with lollipop paws,
And forty bottles of ring-bo-ree,
And no end of Stilton cheese.

Far and few, far and few,
Are the lands where the Jumblies live;
Their heads are green and their hands are blue;
And they went to sea in a sieve.

And in twenty years they all came back,—
In twenty years or more;
And every one said, "How tall they've grown!
For they've been to the Lakes, and the Terrible Zone,
And the hills of the Chankly Bore."
And they drank their health, and gave them a feast
Of dumplings made of beautiful yeast;
And every one said, "If we only live,
We, too, will go to sea in a sieve,
To the hills of the Chankly Bore."

Far and few, far and few,
Are the lands where the Jumblies live;
Their heads are green, and their hands are blue;
And they went to sea in a sieve.

THE DONG WITH A LUMINOUS NOSE

When awful darkness and silence reign
Over the great Gromboolian plain,
Through the long, long wintry nights;
When the angry breakers roar
As they beat on the rocky shore;
When storm-clouds brood on the towering heights
Of the Hills of the Chankly Bore,—

Then, through the vast and gloomy dark
There moves what seems a fiery spark,—
A lonely spark with silvery rays
Piercing the coal-black night,—
A Meteor strange and bright:
Hither and thither the vision strays,
A single lurid light.

Slowly it wanders, pauses, creeps,—
Anon it sparkles, flashes, and leaps;
And ever as onward it gleaming goes
A light on the Bong-tree stem it throws.
And those who watch at that midnight hour
From Hall or Terrace or lofty Tower
Cry, as the wild light passes along,—
“The Dong! The Dong!
The wandering Dong through the forest goes!
The Dong! The Dong!
The Dong with a luminous Nose!”

Long years ago
The Dong was happy and gay,
Till he fell in love with a Jumbly Girl
Who came to those shores one day.
For the Jumblies came in a sieve, they did,—
Landing at eve near the Zemmary Fidd
Where the Oblong Oysters grow,
And the rocks are smooth and gray,
And all the woods and valleys rang
With the chorus they daily and nightly sang,—

“Far and few, far and few,
Are the lands where the Jumblies live;
Their heads are green, and their hands are blue,
And they went to sea in a sieve.”

Happily, happily passed those days!
While the cheerful Jumblies staid;
They danced in circlets all night long,
To the plaintive pipe of the lively Dong,
In moonlight, shine, or shade.
For day and night he was always there
By the side of the Jumbly Girl so fair,
With her sky-blue hands and her sea-green hair;
Till the morning came of that hateful day
When the Jumblies sailed in their sieve away,
And the Dong was left on the cruel shore
Gazing, gazing for evermore,—
Ever keeping his weary eyes on
That pea-green sail on the far horizon,—
Singing the Jumbly Chorus still
As he sat all day on the grassy hill,—
“Far and few, far and few,
Are the lands where the Jumblies live;
Their heads are green, and their hands are blue,
And they went to sea in a sieve.”

But when the sun was low in the West,
The Dong arose and said,—
“What little sense I once possessed
Has quite gone out of my head!”
And since that day he wanders still
By lake and forest, marsh and hill,
Singing, “O somewhere, in valley or plain,
Might I find my Jumbly Girl again!
For ever I’ll seek by lake and shore
Till I find my Jumbly Girl once more!”
Playing a pipe with silvery squeaks,
Since then his Jumbly Girl he seeks;
And because by night he could not see,
He gathered the bark of the Twangum Tree

On the flowery plain that grows.
 And he wove him a wondrous Nose,—
 A Nose as strange as a Nose could be!
 Of vast proportions and painted red,
 And tied with cords to the back of his head.
 In a hollow rounded space it ended
 With a luminous lamp within suspended,
 All fenced about
 With a bandage stout
 To prevent the wind from blowing it out;
 And with holes all round to send the light
 In gleaming rays on a dismal night.

And now each night, and all night long,
 Over those plains still roams the Dong;
 And above the wail of the Chimp and Snipe
 You may hear the squeak of his plaintive pipe,
 While ever he seeks, but seeks in vain,
 To meet with his Jumbly Girl again;
 Lonely and wild, all night he goes,—
 The Dong with a luminous Nose!
 And all who watch at the midnight hour,
 From Hall or Terrace or lofty Tower,
 Cry, as they trace the meteor bright,
 Moving along through the dreary night,—
 “This is the hour when forth he goes,
 The Dong with a luminous Nose!
 Yonder over the plain he goes,—
 He goes!
 He goes,—
 The Dong with a luminous Nose!”

THE DUCK AND THE KANGAROO

Said the Duck to the Kangaroo,
 “Good gracious! how you hop
 Over the fields, and the water too,
 As if you never would stop!
 My life is a bore in this nasty pond;

And I long to go out in the world beyond:
I wish I could hop like you,"
Said the Duck to the Kangaroo.

"Please give me a ride on your back,"
Said the Duck to the Kangaroo:
"I would sit quite still, and say nothing but 'Quack'
The whole of the long day through:
And we'd go to the Dee, and the Jelly Bo Lee,
Over the land, and over the sea:
Please take me a ride! oh, do!"
Said the Duck to the Kangaroo.

Said the Kangaroo to the Duck,
"This requires some little reflection.
Perhaps, on the whole, it might bring me luck:
And there seems but one objection;
Which is, if you'll let me speak so bold,
Your feet are unpleasantly wet and cold,
And would probably give me the roo-
Matiz," said the Kangaroo.

Said the Duck, "As I sat on the rocks,
I have thought over that completely;
And I bought four pairs of worsted socks,
Which fit my web-feet neatly;
And, to keep out the cold, I've bought a cloak,
And every day a cigar I'll smoke;
All to follow my own dear true
Love of a Kangaroo."

Said the Kangaroo, "I'm ready,
All in the moonlight pale;
But to balance me well, dear Duck, sit steady,
And quite at the end of my tail."
So away they went with a hop and a bound;
And they hopped the whole world three times round.
And who so happy, oh! who,
As the Duck and the Kangaroo!

THE POBBLE WHO HAS NO TOES

The Pobble who has no toes
Had once as many as we;
When they said, "Some day you may lose them all,"
He replied, "Fish fiddle de-dee!"
And his Aunt Jobiska made him drink
Lavender water tinged with pink;
For she said, "The World in general knows
There's nothing so good for a Pobble's toes!"

The Pobble who has no toes
Swam across the Bristol Channel;
But before he set out he wrapped his nose
In a piece of scarlet flannel.
For his Aunt Jobiska said, "No harm
Can come to his toes if his nose is warm;
And it's perfectly known that a Pobble's toes
Are safe—provided he minds his nose."

The Pobble swam fast and well,
And when boats or ships came near him,
He tinkledy-binkledy-winkled a bell
So that all the world could hear him.
And all the Sailors and Admirals cried,
When they saw him nearing the farther side,
"He has gone to fish for his Aunt Jobiska's
Runcible Cat with crimson whiskers!"

But before he touched the shore—
The shore of the Bristol Channel,
A sea-green Porpoise carried away
His wrapper of scarlet flannel.
And when he came to observe his feet,
Formerly garnished with toes so neat,
His face at once became forlorn
On perceiving that all his toes were gone!

And nobody ever knew,
From that dark day to the present,

Whoso had taken the Pobble's toes,
In a manner so far from pleasant.
Whether the shrimps or crawfish gray,
Or crafty mermaids stole them away,
Nobody knew; and nobody knows
How the Pobble was robbed of his twice five toes!

The Pobble who has no toes
Was placed in a friendly Bark,
And they rowed him back and carried him up
To his Aunt Jobiska's Park.
And she made him a feast at his earnest wish,
Of eggs and buttercups fried with fish;
And she said, "It's a fact the whole world knows,
That Pobbles are happier without their toes."

*Mary J. Lawrence
1884
Hampshire*

CHAPTER NINE

LEWIS CARROLL

LEWIS CARROLL was not his name, to begin with. His name was Charles Lutwidge Dodgson. Did you ever notice, by the way, how many humorists adopt a pen-name? Swift is Bickerstaff, Carlyle is Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, Irving is Diedrich Knickerbocker, Clemens is Mark Twain. The reason is not that the writer wishes to conceal his identity, but that as the humorist has a double personality, so he must have two names: the baptismal name, to represent his sober, serious self; and an "adopted name of privilege," to represent his second self. Charles Lutwidge Dodgson was a graduate of Oxford, and he made his living by lecturing and writing on mathematics. Lewis Carroll was a graduate of Mother Goose, playmate of children, particularly of little girls, and he had his fun by writing nonsense books and inventing puzzles. Charles Lutwidge Dodgson wrote a *Syllabus of Plane Algebraical Geometry*; Lewis Carroll wrote the two most delicious prose nonsense tales in the world: *Alice in Wonderland*, and *Through the Looking Glass*. It is said that Queen Victoria, who, in spite of her many lapses as a literary arbiter, did sometimes praise a good book, liked *Alice in Wonderland* so well that she asked the author to send her a copy of his *next* book. He did: a volume on trigonometry.

Charles Lutwidge Dodgson was born in 1832, one of a family of eleven children. His father and his immediate ancestors had been clergymen. Charles was educated for the Church, but because of a defect in speech, he proceeded

no further than deacon's orders. His mathematical bent revealed itself early in life, and at Rugby and at Christ Church, Oxford, he carried off high honors in mathematics. In 1885 he was made "Master of the House," and from that time until the end of his life, Mr. Dodgson was seldom absent from his quarters in the famous and beautiful old college. He grew to be an integral part of the institution, one of the most picturesque and lovable of the dons of Oxford. Had he never written the children's books which made him famous, Christ Church would still hold precious the memory of the mathematical scholar.

Mr. Dodgson began to write early, editing magazines and making parodies during his school vacations. Critics tell us that the parody is a low form of literature. That depends. It is not dignified, of course; and it requires no creative power, since its humor depends upon a more or less contemptuous imitation of an original. But if it is cleverly done, if it utilizes all its possibilities for contrast and incongruity, it is often delightfully funny. This is especially true if the original be heavy or tragic or affected, or if in any respect it crosses the borderline between pathos and bathos, between sentiment and sentimentality, between eloquence and grandiloquence; then it is a fair mark for the arrow of the parodist. The humorist is an avowed enemy of affectation, and the parody is a favorite weapon. The more familiar one is with the original the more irresistible is the appeal of the parody, since the humor of the good parody depends upon how clearly it presents a contrast between the original, on a high plane, and the imitation, on a lower plane. And when the parody is an imitation of a species rather than of a speci-

men, it is often humorous in the truest sense, as witness Chaucer's *Sir Thopas*, Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*, and Thackeray's *The Rose and the Ring*.

A few of Carroll's cleverest parodies are: *Echoes*, a queer medley of Tennyson, Wordsworth, and others; *Turtle Soup*, a take-off on *Beautiful Night*; *To the Looking-Glass World*, an imitation of Scott's *Bonny Dundee*; *You are old, Father William*, based on a popular moralizing poem by Southey, now happily forgotten, beginning with these same words; and *Hiawatha's Photographing*, in the easy, running meter of the *Song of Hiawatha*. Let me quote a little of this,—the passage describing how the father has his picture taken. Notice how accurately Carroll has mimicked the familiar characteristics of the original.

First the Governor, the Father,
He suggested velvet curtains
Looped about a massy pillar;
And the corner of a table,
Of a rosewood dining-table.
He would hold a scroll of something,
Hold it firmly in his left hand;
He would keep his right hand buried
(Like Napoleon) in his waistcoat;
He would contemplate the distance
With a look of pensive meaning,
As of ducks that die in tempests.
Grand, heroic was the notion,
Yet the picture failed entirely,
Failed, because he moved a little,
Moved, because he couldn't help it.

Here is a short parody from *Alice in Wonderland*. Alice is trying to repeat *How doth the little busy bee*, but the nearest she can come to it is this:

How doth the little crocodile
Improve his shining tail,
And pour the waters of the Nile
On every golden scale!

How cheerfully he seems to grin,
How neatly spreads his claws,
And welcomes little fishes in
With gently smiling jaws!

But it is in the nonsense poetry proper that Carroll excels. And it is in this that the poet's mathematical training is of value. As Mr. G. K. Chesterton says, "He gave mathematics a holiday: he carried logic into the wild lands of illogicality." For to be consistently illogical one must know what logic is; to deviate forever from the straight line, one must know where the straight line runs. To stand on one's head requires more muscular strength and agility than to stand on one's feet. And that is what the nonsense writer does—he stands on his head and sees the whole universe from a new angle.

The true nonsense-maker must perform a more complicated mental operation than the "sense-maker." He must organize and then disorganize so that his ideas are in a disorderly order. "It is easy to write like a madman," some one remarked to the dramatist, Nathaniel Lee. "No," he replied; "it is hard to write like a madman, but easy to write like a fool." What the thinker does is to make a normal, conventional mirror; the nonsense writer has the more difficult task of constructing the distorting mirrors that one finds in a Laughing Gallery, a task that certainly requires a profounder knowledge of the laws of reflection of light. And Lewis Carroll's Laughing Gallery, though perhaps it does not contain so many mirrors as Lear's, is unequalled in the number of laughs a minute.

Here is the very finest example of "portmanteau" nonsense poetry ever written, *Jabberwocky*, which appears in *Through the Looking Glass*:

JABBERWOCKY

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!"

He took his vorpal sword in hand:
Long time the manxome foe he sought—
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,
And stood awhile in thought.

And as in uffish thought he stood,
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
And burbled as it came!

One, two! One, two! And through and through
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
He left it dead, and with its head
He went galumphing back.

"And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!"
He chortled in his joy.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

"It seems very pretty," Alice said, when she had finished it; "but it's rather hard to understand. Somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas—only I don't exactly know what they are! However, somebody killed something: that's clear." Yes, Alice that's clear; and it really does fill your head with ideas.

I have always doubted the adequacy of Humpty-Dumpty's explanation of the portmanteau word. The true genesis of the portmanteau word is found in Booth Tarkington's *The Turmoil*. The amusing negro in that novel is heard repeating the word "lamidal." When asked where he heard the word, he replies: "I never did hear it: I uz dess sittin' thinkum to myse'f, and she pop in my head. An' she soun' so good, seem like she gotta mean somepin." "Brillig" and "whiffling" and "beamish"—"they soun' so good, they gotta mean somepin."

One of the best examples of Carroll's straightforwardly crooked, illogically logical bits of unreasonable reasoning is *The White Rabbit's Verses*. These verses were produced as incriminating evidence against the Knave of Hearts, what time he was arraigned before the King for stealing the Queen's tarts. Alice, who is a staunch believer in the innocence of the Knave, will not admit the validity or pertinence of the evidence. "If any one can explain it," she cries, "I'll give him a sixpence. I don't believe there's an atom of meaning in it." But Alice is wrong: the king is right. "I don't know," said he, spreading out the verses on his knee and looking at them with one eye; "I seem to see some meaning in them after all." Of course, there is some meaning in them: Alice was asleep, that's evident.

They told me you had been to her,
And mentioned me to him;

She gave me a good character,
But said I could not swim.

He sent them word I had not gone
(We know it to be true):
If she should push the matter on,
What would become of you?

I gave her one, they gave him two,
You gave us three or more;
They all returned from him to you,
Though they were mine before.

If I or she should chance to be
Involved in this affair,
He trusts to you to set them free,
Exactly as we were.

My notion was that you had been
(Before she had this fit)
An obstacle that came between
Him, and ourselves, and it.

Don't let him know she liked them best,
For this must ever be
A secret, kept from all the rest,
Between yourself and me.

Such evidence would convict any one, especially one who is already known as a Knave!

The best edition of the author's poems is *The Hunting of the Snark and Other Poems*, published by Harper and Brothers. Except for the doubtful wisdom of separating the poems belonging to the *Alice* books and to *Sylvie and Bruno* from their context, the book is admirable. The title piece is "an agony in eight fits," and since the author himself said, "As to the meaning of the Snark, I'm very much afraid I didn't mean anything but Nonsense!" we need not concern

ourselves with the idea that it may be an allegory in disguise. Although *The Snark* is particularly suitable for older children, almost any child will appreciate its rich nonsense, its incongruities, mock seriousness, and grotesque mingling of grave and gay.

Well-meaning teachers and parents often make the mistake of trying to find in children's literature meanings which the author never intended. They cannot take up a fairy story without seeking to teach lessons of kindness, industry, piety. A ghost story becomes in their didactic hands an allegory of life, a Mother Goose jingle turns into a pretty sermonette. When shall we learn to expect a specimen to give us only what the author put into it? And when shall we learn that pleasure is, in and of itself, profit, that a nonsense poem was written solely for nonsense, must be presented just as nonsense, must produce the natural result of nonsense—laughter?

Lewis Carroll's great success as a writer for children did not interrupt the even tenor of C. L. Dodgson's life at Christ Church. He continued his mathematical work, entertained his friends, and found his chief pleasure in making children happy. He devoted the greater part of his income from the sale of his children's books to good works among his little friends. One of his most charming customs consisted in dispatching fresh copies of his books to children confined in hospitals. After his death, "Alice" cots in memory of him were established in London hospitals, by popular subscription.

His life came to an end at Guildford on January 14, 1898, and the cross which marks his last resting place is appropriately inscribed not only with his name, Revd. Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, but also with the name by which he en-

deared himself to little folks—Lewis Carroll. In the following stanza, his friend, Miss M. E. Manners, herself a writer for children, expressed the tribute we should all like to offer him.

Carroll! accept the heartfelt thanks
Of children of all ages,
Of those who long have left their ranks,
Yet still must love the pages
Written by him whose magic wand
Called up the scenes of Wonderland.

SELECTIONS FROM LEWIS CARROLL

THE DEDICATION

(Through the Looking-Glass and what Alice found there)

Child of the pure unclouded brow
And dreaming eyes of wonder!
Though time be fleet, and I and thou
Are half a life asunder,
Thy loving smile will surely hail
The love-gift of a fairy-tale.

I have not seen thy sunny face, .
Nor heard thy silver laughter:
No thought of me shall find a place
In thy young life's hereafter—
Enough that now thou wilt not fail
To listen to my fairy-tale.

A tale begun in other days,
When summer suns were glowing—
A simple chime, that served to time
The rhythm of our rowing—
Whose echoes live in memory yet,
Though envious years would say 'forget.'

Come, hearken then, ere voice of dread,
With bitter tidings laden,
Shall summon to unwelcome bed
A melancholy maiden!
We are but older children, dear,
Who fret to find our bedtime near.

Without, the frost, the blinding snow,
The storm-wind's moody madness—
Within, the firelight's ruddy glow,
And childhood's nest of gladness.
The magic words shall hold thee fast:
Thou shalt not heed the raving blast.

And, though the shadow of a sigh
 May tremble through the story,
 For 'happy summer days' gone by,
 And vanish'd summer glory—
 It shall not touch, with breath of bale,
 The presence of our fairy-tale.

ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND

(The Prefatory poem)

All in the golden afternoon
 Full leisurely we glide;
 For both our oars, with little skill,
 By little arms are plied,
 While little hands make vain pretence
 Our wanderings to guide.

Ah, cruel Three! In such an hour,
 Beneath such dreamy weather,
 To beg a tale of breath too weak
 To stir the tiniest feather!
 Yet what can one poor voice avail
 Against three tongues together?

Imperious Prima flashes forth
 Her edict "to begin it"—
 In gentler tones Secunda hopes
 "There will be nonsense in it!"
 While Tertia interrupts the tale
 Not *more* than once a minute.

Anon, to sudden silence won,
 In fancy they pursue
 The dream-child moving through a land
 Of wonders wild and new,
 In friendly chat with bird or beast—
 And half believe it true.

And ever, as the story drained
 The wells of fancy dry,

And faintly strove that weary one
To put the subject by,
“The rest next time”—“It is next time!”
The happy voices cry.

Thus grew the tale of Wonderland:
Thus slowly, one by one,
Its quaint events were hammered out—
And now the tale is done,
And home we steer, a merry crew,
Beneath the setting sun.

AN AGED AGED MAN

I'll tell thee everything I can:
There's little to relate.
I saw an aged aged man,
A-sitting on a gate.
‘Who are you, aged man?’ I said.
‘And how is it you live?’
And his answer trickled through my head,
Like water through a sieve.

He said, ‘I look for butterflies
That sleep among the wheat:
I make them into mutton-pies,
And sell them in the street.
I sell them unto men,’ he said,
‘Who sail on stormy seas;
And that's the way I get my bread—
A trifle, if you please.’

But I was thinking of a plan
To dye one's whiskers green,
And always use so large a fan
That they could not be seen.
So, having no reply to give
To what the old man said,
I cried, ‘Come, tell me how you live!’
And thumped him on the head.

His accents mild took up the tale:
He said 'I go my ways,
And when I find a mountain-rill,
I set it in a blaze;
And thence they make a stuff they call
Rowland's Macassar-Oil—
Yet twopence-halfpenny is all
They give me for my toil.'

But I was thinking of a way
To feed oneself on batter,
And so go on from day to day
Getting a little fatter.
I shook him well from side to side,
Until his face was blue:
'Come, tell me how you live,' I cried,
'And what it is you do!'

He said 'I hunt for haddocks' eyes
Among the heather bright,
And work them into waistcoat-buttons
In the silent night.
And these I do not sell for gold
Or coin of silvery shine,
But for a copper halfpenny,
And that will purchase nine.

'I sometimes dig for buttered rolls,
Or set limed twigs for crabs:
I sometimes search the grassy knolls
For wheels of Hansom-cabs.
And that's the way' (he gave a wink)
'By which I get my wealth—
And very gladly will I drink
Your Honor's noble health.'

I heard him then, for I had just
Completed my design
To keep the Menai bridge from rust
By boiling it in wine.
I thanked him much for telling me

The way he got his wealth,
But chiefly for his wish that he
Might drink my noble health.

And now, if e'er by chance I put
My fingers into glue,
Or madly squeeze a right-hand foot
Into a left-hand shoe,
Or if I drop upon my toe
A very heavy weight,
I weep, for it reminds me so
Of that old man I used to know—
Whose look was mild, whose speech was slow,
Whose hair was whiter than the snow,
Whose face was very like a crow,
With eyes, like cinders, all aglow,
Who seemed distracted with his woe,
Who rocked his body to and fro,
And muttered mumblingly and low,
As if his mouth were full of dough,
Who snorted like a buffalo—
That summer evening long ago,
A-sitting on a gate.

YOU ARE OLD, FATHER WILLIAM

“You are old, Father William,” the young man said,
“And your hair has become very white;
And yet you incessantly stand on your head—
Do you think, at your age, it is right?”

“In my youth,” Father William replied to his son,
“I feared it might injure the brain;
But, now that I’m perfectly sure I have none,
Why, I do it again and again.”

“You are old,” said the youth, “as I mentioned before,
And have grown most uncommonly fat;
Yet you turned a back-somersault in at the door—
Pray, what is the reason of that?”

"In my youth," said the sage, as he shook his gray locks,
"I kept all my limbs very supple
By the use of this ointment—one shilling the box—
Allow me to sell you a couple?"

"You are old," said the youth, "and your jaws are too weak
For anything tougher than suet;
Yet you finished the goose, with the bones and the beak—
Pray, how did you manage to do it?"

"In my youth," said his father, "I took to the law
And argued each case with my wife;
And the muscular strength, which it gave to my jaw,
Has lasted the rest of my life."

"You are old," said the youth, "one would hardly suppose
That your eye was as ready as ever;
Yet you balanced an eel on the end of your nose—
What made you so awfully clever?"

"I have answered three questions, and that is enough,"
Said his father; "don't give yourself airs!
Do you think I can listen all day to such stuff?
Be off, or I'll kick you down stairs!"

A STRANGE WILD SONG

He thought he saw a Buffalo
Upon the chimney-piece:
He looked again, and found it was
His Sister's Husband's Niece.
"Unless you leave this house," he said,
"I'll send for the Police."

He thought he saw a Rattlesnake
That questioned him in Greek:
He looked again, and found it was
The Middle of Next Week.
"The one thing I regret," he said,
"Is that it cannot speak!"

He thought he saw a Banker's Clerk
Descending from the 'bus:
He looked again, and found it was
A Hippopotamus.
"If this should stay to dine," he said,
"There won't be much for us!"

He thought he saw a Kangaroo
That worked a coffee-mill:
He looked again, and found it was
A Vegetable-Pill.
"Were I to swallow this," he said,
"I should be very ill."

He thought he saw a Coach and Four
That stood beside his bed:
He looked again and found it was
A Bear without a Head.
"Poor thing," he said, "poor silly thing!
It's waiting to be fed!"

He thought he saw an Albatross
That fluttered round the Lamp:
He looked again, and found it was
A Penny Postage-Stamp.
"You'd best be getting home," he said:
"The nights are very damp!"

He thought he saw a Garden Door
That opened with a key:
He looked again, and found it was
A Double-Rule-of-Three:
"And all its mystery," he said,
"Is clear as day to me!"

He thought he saw an Argument
That proved he was the Pope:
He looked again, and found it was
A Bar of Mottled Soap.
"A fact so dread," he faintly said,
"Extinguishes all hope!"

THE WALRUS AND THE CARPENTER

The sun was shining on the sea,
Shining with all his might:
He did his very best to make
The billows smooth and bright—
And this was odd, because it was
The middle of the night.

The moon was shining sulkily,
Because she thought the sun
Had got no business to be there
After the day was done—
“It’s very rude of him,” she said,
“To come and spoil the fun!”

The sea was wet as wet could be,
The sands were dry as dry.
You could not see a cloud, because
No cloud was in the sky:
No birds were flying overhead—
There were no birds to fly.

The Walrus and the Carpenter
Were walking close at hand:
They wept like anything to see
Such quantities of sand:
“If this were only cleared away,”
They said, “it *would* be grand.”

“If seven maids with seven mops
Swept it for half a year,
Do you suppose,” the Walrus said,
“That they could get it clear?”
“I doubt it,” said the Carpenter,
And shed a bitter tear.

“O Oysters, come and walk with us!”
The Walrus did beseech.
“A pleasant walk, a pleasant talk,

Along the briny beach:
We cannot do with more than four,
To give a hand to each."

The eldest Oyster looked at him,
But never a word he said:
The eldest Oyster winked his eye,
And shook his heavy head—
Meaning to say he did not choose
To leave the oyster-bed.

But four young Oysters hurried up,
All eager for the treat:
Their coats were brushed, their faces washed,
Their shoes were clean and neat—
And this was odd, because, you know,
They hadn't any feet.

Four other Oysters followed them,
And yet another four;
And thick and fast they came at last,
And more, and more, and more—
All hopping through the frothy waves,
And scrambling to the shore.

The Walrus and the Carpenter
Walked on a mile or so,
And then they rested on a rock
Conveniently low:
And all the little Oysters stood
And waited in a row.

"The time has come," the Walrus said,
"To talk of many things:
Of shoes—and ships—and sealing wax—
Of cabbages—and kings—
And why the sea is boiling hot—
And whether pigs have wings."

"But wait a bit," the Oysters cried,
"Before we have our chat;

For some of us are out of breath,
And all of us are fat!"
"No hurry!" said the Carpenter.
They thanked him much for that.

"A loaf of bread," the Walrus said,
"Is what we chiefly need:
Pepper and vinegar besides
Are very good indeed—
Now, if you're ready, Oysters dear,
We can begin to feed."

"But not on us!" the Oysters cried,
Turning a little blue.
"After such kindness, that would be
A dismal thing to do!"
"The night is fine," the Walrus said.
"Do you admire the view?"

"It was so kind of you to come!
And you are very nice!"
The Carpenter said nothing but
"Cut us another slice.
I wish you were not quite so deaf—
I've had to ask you twice!"

"It seems a shame," the Walrus said,
"To play them such a trick.
After we've brought them out so far,
And made them trot so quick!"
The Carpenter said nothing but
"The butter's spread too thick!"

"I weep for you," the Walrus said:
"I deeply sympathize."
With sobs and tears he sorted out
Those of the largest size,
Holding his pocket-handkerchief
Before his streaming eyes.

“O Oysters,” said the Carpenter,
“You’ve had a pleasant run!
Shall we be trotting home again?”

But answer came there none—
And this was scarcely odd, because
They’d eaten every one.

CHAPTER TEN

EUGENE FIELD AND JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

EUGENE FIELD and James Whitcomb Riley are naturally, almost inevitably coupled in our thoughts, twinned by our realization of the poetic kinship of the two men. It is not only that they were contemporaries and friends, and that they lived in the same section of the country; not only that both loved children and were loved of them, that they wrote much of them and for them; not only that in some respects the experiences, development, and education of the two were surprisingly similar. It is rather that Field and Riley are men of very much the same intellectual and emotional fiber, with somewhat the same interests in life and the same outlook on life, with the same fondness for the elemental—and often for the sentimental—aspects of human nature and the humbler, lowlier phases of existence.

Minor poets, “journalistic” poets, they have been called; but both were unquestionably highly endowed with poetic powers, both were honest and homespun, natural, spontaneous, despising literary snobbishness and priggishness and solemn-faced pedantry, and loving everything sweet and fine and simple and *human*.

It seems best, then, that “in their death they be not divided,” that we deal with these two children’s poets in one chapter, indicating in what ways their poetry is alike and in what ways different, and pointing out the qualities and the contributions of each.

But first, some account of the events and experiences which molded their lives.

'Gene Field was born in St. Louis in 1850; but both his parents being of New England stock, it was in New England, in Massachusetts, that the boy grew up and attended school and college. College life failed to hold the brilliant and restless youth; and when his father died and left him a small legacy, he joyfully squandered it all on a grand tour of Europe.

Having returned to St. Louis and married, he found it imperative to choose a vocation. He took what was nearest to hand and what was eminently for his hands, journalism. From this time until his death, Field was a slave, albeit a willing slave, to the newspaper. In St. Joseph, in St. Louis, Kansas City, Denver, and finally in Chicago, he served his apprenticeship and practiced his art, becoming one of the first and to this day one of the foremost of newspaper "columnists."

In Field's *Denver Tribune* column called "Odds and Ends" and in his more famous *Chicago News* "Sharps and Flats" appeared—along with airy persiflage, epigrams, paradoxes, gossip, hoaxes—most of the verse upon which his reputation depends. Scattered throughout *A Little Book of Western Verse*, *A Second Book of Verse*, *With Trumpet and Drum*, and *Love Songs of Childhood* are the children's poems, a large collection of tender and beautiful verse, some of which the world will not willingly let die.

Field was not well known to the reading public until the publication of "Little Boy Blue," in 1887, but from that time on he stood head and shoulders above all practitioners of the pleasant art of newspaper verse. He died in 1895, honored of all men and loved by all their children.

Field's married life was a very happy one. He was the father of eight children, three girls and five boys.

James Whitcomb Riley was born in 1849 in Greenfield, Indiana, and in Indiana he was brought up, did his work, and lived his life. His parents were pioneers, the mother from North Carolina, the father from Pennsylvania; and James (or "Bud," to give him his real name) was from his childhood familiar with the simple and homely rural and village existence pictured so vividly and charmingly in his poetry. Riley had meager schooling. But he compensated for this lack by a wealth of educative experiences: reading (one of his early favorites was Dickens), learning to play all the musical instruments he could get his hands on, and studying law in his father's office—this last under the usual parental compulsion. More important than any of these, it would seem, in the education of the future Hoosier Laureate were the days, and especially the nights, which he spent roaming over the country with an itinerant patent medicine company, entertaining with his fiddle and his verses the crowds that gathered to buy Wizard Oil. Not a very dignified employment, certainly, but perhaps the best apprenticeship Riley could have had for the training of his peculiar powers.

Riley began to find himself when he was given a berth on a newspaper in Greenfield and began to contribute verse to various periodicals. His growing reputation brought him a call to the *Indianapolis Journal*, and from this time James Whitcomb Riley is associated with Indianapolis. In 1883 was published his first book of verse, *The Old Swimmin' Hole and 'Leven More Poems*.

Riley touched the hearts of children everywhere and countless children wrote to him, expressing in childish language their love and trust. He had no children of his own, never having married, and consequently all children were on an equal footing with him. He loved the "happy ones; and

sad ones; the sober and the silent ones; the boisterous and glad ones; the good ones—yes, the good ones, too; and all the lovely bad ones.” The recognition of his great qualities was implicit in the love and veneration with which children regarded him and was fittingly observed by Governor Ralston’s proclamation setting aside October 7, 1915, the anniversary of the poet’s birth, as Riley Day in Indiana.

The poet was honored by degrees from Yale University, Wabash College, Indiana University, and the University of Pennsylvania. He was elected a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and received the gold medal of the National Institute of Arts and Letters. He died in 1916.

Having followed Field and Riley through their constructive experiences, let us consider them as children’s poets.

Field and Riley are preëminent among the men and women with whom we have been associating in these studies in their “passion for the past,” in their nostalgia for youth, in their retrospectiveness. All children’s poets, as I have more than once stated, are fond of wandering back into their early haunts and living their lives over again, conjuring out of the “vasty deep” of the past the scenes and emotions of childhood. But none have so frequently and so vividly and happily expressed this mood in verse as have these two poets. To each of them his childhood was—to use the familiar phrase—“the happiest time of his life,” the period most replete with zest and romance and unalloyed, idyllic joy, brimful of gladness and contaminated with no taint of hypocrisy. “There’s not a joy the world can give like that it takes away”—this they maintain, not polemically but poetically, over and over again. Like Mrs. Browning, they are forever trying to find their way back to the charm and contentment of the Lost Bower; like William Allingham,

they are haunted by remembrances of the Tarn, which, seen in childhood, can never be found again nor ever forgotten; like Henry Vaughan, they exclaim,

O, how I long to travel back
And tread again that ancient track!

Riley is forever exploring the past; every one who knows him will recall *Old Aunt Mary's*, *The Old Trundle-bed*, *Who Santy Clause Wuz*, *Waitin' for the Cat to Die*, *The Muskingum Valley*, *Our Boyhood Haunts*, *Up and Down Old Brandywine*, *The Old Swimming Hole*, and dozens of others, in which the poet sentimentalizes and rhapsodizes over the small chronicles of boyhood. And Field, too, hears often and hears gladly the voice that wails "about the moldered lodges of the past"; witness *The Fire-Hangbird's Nest*, *To a Little Brook*, *Long Ago*, *In the Firelight*, *Our Whippings*, *The Bell-Flower Tree*, and *When I was a Boy*.

A typical Riley poem on this theme of the past is *The Days Gone By*.

THE DAYS GONE BY ¹

O the days gone by! O the days gone by!
The apples in the orchard, and the pathway through the rye;
The chirrup of the robin, and the whistle of the quail
As he piped across the meadows sweet as any nightingale;
When the bloom was on the clover, and the blue was in the sky,
And my happy heart brimmed over, in the days gone by.

In the days gone by, when my naked feet were tripped
By the honeysuckle tangles where the water-lilies dipped,
And the ripples of the river lipped the moss along the brink

¹ From *Rhymes of Childhood*, by James Whitcomb Riley, copyright 1890. Used by special permission of the publishers, The Bobbs-Merrill Company.

Where the placid-eyed and lazy-footed cattle came to drink,
And the tilting snipe stood fearless of the truant's wayward cry
And the splashing of the swimmer, in the days gone by.

O the days gone by! O the days gone by!
The music of the laughing lip, the luster of the eye;
The childish faith in fairies, and Aladdin's magic ring—
The simple, soul-reposing, glad belief in everything,—
When life was like a story, holding neither sob nor sigh,
In the golden olden glory of the days gone by.

More imaginative and melodious is Field's *The Brook*.

THE BROOK

I looked in the brook and saw a face—
 Heigh-ho, but a child was I!
There were rushes and willows in that place,
 And they clutched at the brook as the brook ran by;
And the brook it ran its own sweet way,
As a child doth run in heedless play,
And as it ran I heard it say:
 "Hasten with me
 To the roistering sea
 That is wroth with the flame of the morning sky!"

I look in the brook and see a face—
 Heigh-ho, but the years go by!
The rushes are dead in the old-time place,
 And the willows I knew when a child was I,
And the brook it seemeth to me to say,
As ever it stealeth on its way—
Solemnly now, and not in play:
 "Oh, come with me
 To the slumbrous sea
 That is gray with the peace of the evening sky!"

*Heigh-ho, but the years go by—
I would to God that a child were I!*

Now, these are not poems for children,—that demands no argument,—though the authors insert them among the poems

intended for children. Like Whittier's *Barefoot Boy* and Hood's *I Remember* and Longfellow's *My Lost Youth*, they but express the lovingly regretful, poignantly sweet emotions that surge into the heart of the sensitive man or woman when the flood-gates of memory are opened. But they are utterly alien to the moods of children, hopelessly at variance with their forward-looking thoughts and hopes. I have quoted these two poems and spoken of the others only because they represent the fundamental point of view of the poets we are discussing.

Both Field and Riley have a rich vein of fun and nonsense, and they mine from it plentifully. Though much of their humor is akin to the fun of Lear and Carroll, the American poets have introduced a new and effective comic note: the mingling of the frightful and the absurd. Most of us—I hope—are acquainted with that exquisite feeling of half-fright, half-amusement that takes possession of us when we read or hear a negro ghost-story or some of the Germanic folk stories like *The Youth who Went forth to Learn what Fear Was*. The story is droll and grotesque, but there is something in it so weird, so shivery and shuddery, that we do not know whether to indulge in gooseflesh or giggles. This is the original note in Field's and Riley's humorous verse.

Riley especially was fond of this kind of tale: it seemed to suit his elfish, waggish humor. He had no fear of harming children by frightening them a bit. Perhaps the well-known *Little Orphant Annie*, with its continued and convincing asseveration that "*The Gobble-uns'll git you, if you don't watch out,*" is his masterpiece, though the tale of the *Lugubrious Whing-Whang*, with its refrain of "Tickle me, Love, in these lonesome ribs," is irresistibly funny. I quote a poem not so well known:

THE NINE LITTLE GOBLINS ¹

They all climbed up on a high board-fence—
Nine little Goblins, with green-glass eyes—
Nine little Goblins that had no sense,
And couldn't tell coppers from cold mince pies;
And they all climbed up on the fence, and sat—
And I asked them what they were staring at.

And the first one said, as he scratched his head
With a queer little arm that reached out of his ear
And rasped its claws in his hair so red—
"This is what this little arm is fer!"
And he scratched and stared, and the next one said:
"How on earth do *you* scratch your 'head?"

And he laughed like the screech of a rusty hinge—
Laughed and laughed till his face grew black;
And when he choked, with a final twinge
Of his stifling laughter, he thumped his back
With a fist that grew on the end of his tail
Till the breath came back to his lips so pale.

And the third little Goblin leered round at me—
And there were no lids on his eyes at all—
And he clucked one eye, and he says, says he,
"What is the style of your socks this fall?"
And he clapped his heels—and I sighed to see
That he had hands where his feet should be.

Then a bald-faced Goblin, gray and grim,
Bowed his head, and I saw him slip
His eye-brows off, as I looked at him,
And paste them over his upper lip;
And then he moaned in remorseful pain—
"Would—Ah, would I'd me brows again!"

And then the whole of the Goblin band
Rocked on the fence-top to and fro,

¹ From *Rhymes of Childhood*, by James Whitcomb Riley, copyright 1890.
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And clung, in a long row, hand in hand,
 Singing the songs that they used to know—
 Singing the songs that their grandsires sung
 In the goo-goo days of the Goblin-tongue.

And ever they kept their green-glass eyes
 Fixed on me with a stony stare—
 Till my own grew glazed with a dread surmise,
 And my hat whooped up on my lifted hair,
 And I felt the heart in my breast snap to
 As you've heard the lid of a snuff-box do.

And they sang "You're asleep! There is no board-fence,
 And never a Goblin with green-glass eyes!—
 'Tis only a vision the mind invents
 After a supper of cold mince-pies,—
 And you're doomed to dream this way," they said —
 "And you sha'n't wake up till you're clean plum dead!"

Field also is fond of what a young friend of mine calls the "funny-scary" style of verse: his *Seein' Things at Night* compares well with any of Riley's poems in this *genre*. But he is more at home in the province of the grotesquely non-sensical, represented by such poems as *The Duel* (between the gingham dog and the calico cat), *The Princess Ming*, *The Dismal Dole of the Doodledoo*, *The Dinkey Bird*, *The Sugar-Plum Tree*, *The Bottle Tree*, *The Fly-away Horse*—rare fun, all of them. One of Field's most delectable stories in what Lewis Carroll calls the "portmanteau" verse is this:

THE TALE OF THE FLIMFLAM

A flimflam flopped from a fillamaloo,
 Where the pollywog pinkled so pale,
 And the pipkin piped a petulant "pooh"
 To the garrulous gawp of the gale.
 "Oh, woe to the swap of the sweeping swipe
 That booms on the bobbling bay!"

Snickered the snark to the snoozing snipe
That lurked where the lamprey lay.

The gluglug glinked in the glimmering gloam,
Where the buzzbuz bumbled his bee—
When the flimflam flitted, all flecked with foam,
From the oozing and succulent sea.
“Oh, swither the swipe, with its sweltering sweep!”
She swore as she swayed in a swoon,
And a doleful dank dumped over the deep,
To the lay of the limpid loon!

This is not so perfect a piece of art as *Jabberwocky*: it lacks the unsmiling earnestness, the straightforward convincingness of Carroll's masterpiece; but when read aloud it is excruciatingly funny, the exaggerated alliteration adding to the “beauty of the nonsense.”

Riley, as all the world knows, is extremely fond of dialect—Hoosier dialect in his verse for grown-ups, child dialect in his verse for growing-ups. *Little Orphant Annie*, *The Raggedy Man*, *The Bumblebee*, *The Boy Lives on our Farm*, *The Squirt-gun Uncle Maked Me*, *The Runaway Boy*, *The Pet Coon*, are typical child-dialect pieces. The following is representative of his verse in this manner:

AT AUNTY'S HOUSE ¹

One time, when we'z at Aunty's house—
'Way in the country!—where
They's ist but woods—an' pigs, an' cows—
An' all's out-doors an' air!—
An' orchurd-swing; an' churry-trees—
An' *churries* in 'em!—Yes, an' these—
Here red-head birds steals all they please,

¹ From *Rhymes of Childhood*, by James Whitcomb Riley, copyright 1890. Used by special permission of the publishers, The Bobbs-Merrill Company.

An' tetch 'em ef you dare!—
 W'y, wunst, one time, when we wuz there,
We et out on the porch!

Wite where the cellar-door wuz shut
 The table wuz; an' I
 Let Aunty set by me an' cut
 My vittuls up—an' pie.
 'Tuz awful funny!—I could see
 The red-heads in the churry-tree;
 An' bee-hives, where you got to be
 So keerful, goin' by;—
 An' "Comp'ny" there an' all!—an' we—
We et out on the porch!

An' I ist et *p'surves* an' things
 'At Ma don't 'low me to—
 An' *chickun-gizzurds*—(don't like *wings*
 Like *Parunts* does! do *you*?)
 An' all the time, the wind blowed there,
 An' I could feel it in my hair,
 An' ist smell clover *ever*'where!—
 An' a' old red-head flew
 Purt' nigh wite over my high-chair,
When we et on the porch!

No one can doubt that Riley has here edged himself into the precise spot from which the little boy gazes out on life. The situation is descried exactly as a child would descry it and described exactly as a child would describe it: with repetition, false starts and incoherence, "flurrious" excitement, emphasis given to those details that would appeal to him. The dialect, which also is accurate and true to child-language, adds reality and makes the whole a faithful transcript of child life.

Nor can any one doubt, who has read these dialect poems to children, that children enjoy them more because of the

dialect. Now, since children regard the child-dialect as natural and fitting, since it adds the touch of verisimilitude which makes the poems clear pictures of life, I for one am not disposed to carp and cavil over its use. I will grant that it is, in a way, a condescension to the child and a lowering of high poetic standards, and that it probably means a temporary rather than a permanent popularity; but despite all this I gratefully accord to these pleasant verses, so full of sympathetic insight into child-life, so reminiscent of the unrestrained, unaffected expression of children, a high place in my affections. James Whitcomb Riley has in these poems contributed something attractive and distinctive to children's literature.

Field does not often employ the child-dialect. When he does employ it—as in *Just 'fore Christmas*, *Seein' Things*, and *The Limitations of Youth*—he handles it skillfully; but it is not a favorite form. He has, however, done something original in dialect poetry for children, in his imitations of old English. *The Lyttel Boy*, *Lollyby, Lolly, Lollyby*, and *Mediæval Eventide Song* are well-known poems in this style. Perhaps *Lollyby* is the quaintest of these.

LOLLYBY

Last night, whiles that the curfew bell ben ringing,
I heard a moder to her dearie singing
 “Lollyby, lolly, lollyby”;
And presently that chylde did cease hys weeping,
And on his moder's breast did fall a-sleeping
 To “lolly, lolly, lollyby.”

Faire ben the chylde unto his moder clinging,
But fairer yet the moder's gentle singing—
 “Lollyby, lolly, lollyby”;

And angels came and kisst the dearie smiling
 In dreems while him hys moder ben beguiling
 With "lolly, lolly, lollyby."

Then to my harte saies I: "Oh, that thy beating
 Colde be assuaged by some sweete voice repeating
 'Lollyby, lolly, lollyby';
 That like this lyttel chylde I, too, ben sleeping
 With plaisaunt phantasies about me creeping,
 To 'lolly, lolly, lollyby.'"

Some time—mayhap when curfew bells are ringing—
 A weary harte shall heare straunge voices singing
 "Lollyby, lolly, lollyby";
 Sometime, mayhap, with Chryst's love round me streaming,
 I shall be lulled into eternal dreeming,
 With "lolly, lolly, lollyby."

Field was "somedel stope in age" when he was introduced to the old English through the fascinating language of Sir Thomas Malory, and he never mastered the dialect—doubtless he did not care to. But he is adept enough to use it with plaintive, minor, artless effects. He employs the Scotch dialect, also, in one or two of his children's poems, in a manner suggestive of the nursery songs of William Miller.

In one department of children's poetry Field is clearly superior to Riley and to all other children's poets: in the lullaby. Father of eight boys and girls, whom, doubtless, he often sang to sleep and over whose slumber he often brooded, Field had abundant incentive, inspiration, and suggestion for lullaby-poetry. And no poet has "turned his note unto" so many kinds of slumber-songs. Of the one hundred and twenty-five pieces in his *Poems of Childhood*, no fewer than twenty-five are distinctively lullabies, while others suggest the same mood. He runs the range of na-

tionalities: Dutch, Scotch, Japanese, old English, Cornish, Orkney, Norse, Jewish, Armenian, Sicilian, Corsican, each with its appropriate imagery and in its native melody. He touches every responsive chord in the instruments of slumberland; he lavishes upon the drowsy little folk every term of fancy and endearment, as he cuddles them down in his arms and croons and rocks them to sleep. Crowned with poppies, wrapped in dark-blue, star-bespangled robes, 'Gene Field is chief minstrel in the court of Morpheus, and of his modern vice-regent the Sandman.

From out of all this affluence it is hard to decide which of Field's lullabies to reprint. Some of them are in every anthology; a few are too sugarishly sentimental. Perhaps the following is the most original, as it is the most popular:

WYNKEN, BLYNKEN, AND NOD

Wynken, Blynken, and Nod one night

Sailed off in a wooden shoe—

Sailed on a river of crystal light,

Into a sea of dew.

"Where are you going, and what do you wish?"

The old moon asked the three.

"We have come to fish for the herring fish

That live in this beautiful sea;

Nets of silver and gold have we!"

Said Wynken,

Blynken,

And Nod.

The old moon laughed and sang a song,

As they rocked in the wooden shoe,

And the wind that sped them all night long

Ruffled the waves of dew.

The little stars were the herring fish

That lived in that beautiful sea—

“Now cast your nets wherever you wish—
Never afeard are we”;
So cried the stars to the fishermen three:
 Wynken,
 Blynken,
 And Nod.

All night long their nets they threw
 To the stars in the twinkling foam—
Then down from the skies came the wooden shoe,
 Bringing the fishermen home;
'T was all so pretty a sail it seemed
 As if it could not be,
And some folks thought 't was a dream they'd dreamed
 Of sailing that beautiful sea—
But I shall name you the fishermen three:
 Wynken,
 Blynken,
 And Nod.

Wynken and Blynken are two little eyes,
 And Nod is a little head,
And the wooden shoe that sailed the skies
 Is a wee one's trundle-bed:
So shut your eyes while mother sings
 Of wonderful sights that be,
And you shall see the beautiful things
 As you rock in the misty sea,
Where the old shoe rocked the fishermen three:
 Wynken,
 Blynken,
 And Nod.

Riley sings but rarely in this strain. Universal lover of children and children's ways though he was, his bachelorhood made impossible for him the intimate, protecting, parental tenderness of Field. The only two slumber-songs of his that I know of, *Slumber-Song* and *Through Sleepy-land*, are cold and constrained bits of work. Not often

does he invade the wide and rich demesnes of the nursery: it is on the playground that this poet meets his young friends.

Neither does Riley frequent the cemetery—a favorite haunt of Field's. Not even Christina Rossetti chants as many dirges over dead children as does Field. At least one sixth of the poems listed by Field as children's poems deal with the death of children. Among the most touching of these are *Krinken*, *Christmas Treasures*, *Little Homer's Slate*, and *The Dead Babe*. But most affecting of them all—perhaps Field's most perfect poem and the finest of all poems on this theme—is *Little Boy Blue*.

LITTLE BOY BLUE

The little toy dog is covered with dust,
But sturdy and stanch he stands;
And the little toy soldier is red with rust,
And his musket molds in his hands.
Time was when the little toy dog was new,
And the soldier was passing fair;
And that was the time when our Little Boy Blue
Kissed them and put them there.

"Now don't you go till I come," he said,
"And don't you make any noise!"
So, toddling off to his trundle-bed,
He dreamt of his pretty toys;
And, as he was dreaming, an angel song
Awakened our Little Boy Blue—
Oh! the years are many, the years are long,
But the little toy friends are true!

Ay, faithful to Little Boy Blue they stand,
Each in the same old place—
Awaiting the touch of a little hand,
The smile of a little face;
And they wonder, as waiting the long years through

In the dust of that little chair,
What has become of our Little Boy Blue,
Since he kissed them and put them there.

Field's frequent and highly personal treatment of the death of children leads the reader to suspect a tragic bereavement. He did lose a baby son while he was still living in St. Jo, and he wrote *Christmas Treasures* not long after this event. But it was not until 1890 that his Melvin, his oldest boy, died; and *Little Boy Blue* and nearly all the child-dirges had been published before that time. There is little of the autobiographical in these poems; the poet, having suffered the loss of one baby, was sensitized by this experience, so that his imagination and his sympathies were easily evoked and his feelings readily aroused by anything that suggested the death of a little child.

But these dirges, beautiful though they are, are not children's poetry:—

A simple child,
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb,
What should it know of death?

Children are not affected by death, not concerned with it; even the loss of mother or father is but a minor episode in the life of the average little child. It is simply beyond their circle of interests and feelings, and poetry woven out of reflections on death is not within their scope. We may well pity the man or woman, whether childless or blessed with a family of little ones, who is not touched to the quick by *Little Boy Blue* and the best of Field's verse on this theme; but children can never respond to the poignant emotions with which such poems are instinct.

Riley, as I have said, does not often enter these sad precincts. He knows full well that

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,

and not infrequently his children's poems give hints of sadness and tragedy. But in only one or two instances does he really construct his poetry out of the images of death. *Little David* is a poem of this kind, but not a very good one; *When Bessie Died* is better. But Riley too directly and obviously attacks our sensibilities, is too openly anxious to make us weep; Field's method is to suggest, to stimulate our imagination and lure us insensibly into the valley of the shadow.

As I have previously intimated, Riley is at his best when he writes of the joyous scenes and experiences of children. Eating, playing, idling around, listening to fairy and goblin stories and nonsense jingles, or hearing the "hired man" philosophize; the epochal events of child life, such as the circus parade, eating on the porch, celebrating Christmas; children in groups (they are nearly always in groups, as Stevenson's little boy is nearly always solitary); animals and the sunnier aspects of country life—these are his favorite themes. These he handles surpassingly well. And he has come nearer picturing the normal urchin, the average flesh-and-blood youngster, than perhaps any poet of childhood. He pleads most eloquently for the rights of the boy "in the raw" in his essay on *Dialect in Literature*:

Literature cannot possibly tolerate the presence of any but the refined children—the very proper children—the studiously thoughtful, poetic children;—and these must be kept safe from the contaminating touch of our rough-and-tumble little fellows in "hodden gray," with frowsy heads, begrimed but laughing faces, and such

awful, awful vulgarities of naturalness, and crimes of simplicity, and brazen faith and trust, and love of life and everybody in it. All other real people are getting into Literature; and without some real children along will they not soon be getting lonesome, too?

Undoubtedly Riley's family of children are real, all the more real because of the child-talk in which they express themselves. And they are an attractive family, too—Huck Finn is a more wholesome specimen of boy than little Lord Fauntleroy. But authentic as these poems are as pictures of child-life, many of them are too deeply interpenetrated with the introspectiveness and retrospectiveness of age to be genuine poems for children.

Field's realm is in the home. To be sure, he has much to say of children at play, but the image conjured up by most of his verse is of a single child in the home, in the presence of mother or father. He is as fond of ragamuffiny "infant terrors" as Riley, but his distinctive contributions to children's literature are in the provinces of the lullaby and the "laughable lyrics."

Neither Field nor Riley is intent on moralizing. They take children as they are, they bid them enjoy themselves to the full, to extract the utmost pleasure out of life, to be natural and child-like—surely a more sensible attitude and an attitude more conducive to the creation of realistic and artistic poems of childhood than the attitude of the Taylor sisters or Charles and Mary Lamb and others of that school. Yet it is noteworthy that when the two poets under discussion are in the mood for it, they can produce solid and beautiful poetry of the more serious sort, as call to witness the following poem of Field's, one of the most delicately-carved of all his poems:

INSCRIPTION FOR MY LITTLE SON'S SILVER PLATE

When thou dost eat from off this plate,
I charge thee be thou temperate;
Unto thine elders at the board
Do thou sweet reverence accord;
And, though to dignity inclined,
Unto the serving-folk be kind;
Be ever mindful of the poor,
Nor turn them hungry from the door;
And unto God, for health and food
And all that in thy life is good,
Give thou thy heart in gratitude.

Both Field and Riley are skillful versifiers; their sense of rhythm is unerring. Both are fond of rapid-running, jingling movement, especially in their humorous verse. They summon alliteration, assonance, onomatopœia, and similar devices to their aid, and employ all the arts known to Mother Goose and other quantitative verse-makers. Perhaps they sometimes overwork the anapæstic measure; occasionally they slip almost into doggerel; but the crisp, staccato, snare-drum beating of the verses falls with such exhilarating effect upon the ear that we may forgive them their infrequent lapses. I believe that children's delight in hearing Field and Riley read aloud is largely due to the tripping, jingling dance of the meter.

Despite all that can be brought forward to support the claims of these two poets to rank as children's poets, and despite the Field-Riley cult that has grown up, and despite the lovable personal qualities of the two men, I do not assign to them the highest place in the coterie of poets for children. We have hypnotized school-children into admiration of them; we celebrate their birthdays and hang their pictures in our schoolrooms. Because they love children and understand

them and write of childhood so frequently, we have fallen into a habit of referring to them as the "childhood poets" quite as a matter of course. Nine out of ten primary teachers name them first in any discussion of those who write verses for little folks. Both of them would be, could be exquisite poets for children if they did not allow their maturity to obtrude itself so often between them and the children. "I" in many of the poems is too often the poet, and not the child. The living personality of the two men has given them far more importance and popularity than the poets themselves deserve. Riley kept up acquaintance with a large number of children; some of his letters to young friends of his are beautiful and sympathetic; Field was a splendid playmate of children; his delight in toys and sports indicates his own childlike nature. I would not lessen in the slightest the good-fellowship and love which Field and Riley inspire in children through their personality and through their poetry. But they are not the first nor the greatest among the children's poets.

Eugene Field's verses for children are to be found in *The Poems of Eugene Field*, published by Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, under the caption *Poems of Childhood*, though, of course, many splendid editions of the different poems have been made. Riley's poems for children are scattered through many volumes, but the most of them and the best of them are in *Child Rhymes*, Bobbs-Merrill Company, Indianapolis; and *The Child World*, Bowen-Merrill Company, Indianapolis; the first of these volumes is generously and gracefully illustrated.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

FRANK DEMPSTER SHERMAN

A SLIM little volume, bearing the pretty title, *Little-Folk Lyrics* (Houghton Mifflin Company), contains the poems written for children by Frank Dempster Sherman.

Of Sherman little need be said. He was born in 1860, at Peekskill, New York; was educated at Columbia and Harvard, and for some years before his death held the chair of Graphics at Columbia University. He died in 1916. Among his favorite poets were Milton, Keats, Herrick, Tennyson, Emerson, Aldrich,—poets noted for musical power, for delicacy and grace and careful workmanship, three of whom, Herrick, Aldrich, and Keats, exerted a decided influence upon Mr. Sherman's verse. *Little-Folk Lyrics* appeared in 1892 and was revised and enlarged in 1897. Of it the poet says, "My *Little-Folk Lyrics* are just the records of my very happy childhood's memories and fancies: I imagine that almost every grown-up has something like them tucked away in heart and head."

Sherman belongs distinctively to the Stevenson school of children's poets. Perhaps it will be profitable to compare Mr. Sherman with his predecessor and preceptor.

Both Stevenson's and Sherman's poetry for children is almost exclusively lyric. In Sherman's volume there is, I believe, only one story in verse. Both poets interest themselves in children's moods, impressions, emotions, and experiences; both succeed in recapturing their own childish fancies and thoughts, and the memory-children of the two poets are as alike as twins. These children are rather solitary, wistful, fanciful little boys—indoor children, one

might almost say, fond of observing the world through the window pane. On account of delicate health, they seem to be prevented from wandering afield and are obliged to create their universe out of stray glimpses of the real world beyond the front gates. The verses of both poets sound a minor note, a note of plaintiveness, which is beautiful and poignant in its appeal.

Neither Stevenson nor Sherman makes much use of the nonsense element, but often enough provokes a smile from a grown-up reader—even as children themselves often do from the grown-up observer. Every lover of children is acquainted with the mood so often induced by the sight of them—that half-laughing, half-tearful mood, brought on by their quaint sayings, sometimes so startlingly wise and profound; by their innocence, often finding expression in words so naïve and primitive; by their helplessness, which, nevertheless, so frequently foretells future strength. Unfortunate the man or woman, unworthy the teacher, who does not feel this strange attraction in children! As De Quincey says: “By the pity, by the tenderness, and by the peculiar modes of admiration, which connect themselves with the helplessness, with the innocence, and with the simplicity of children, not only are the primal affections strengthened and continually renewed, but the qualities which are dearest in the sight of heaven—the frailty, for instance, which appeals to the forbearance, the innocence which symbolizes the heavenly, and the simplicity which is most alien from the worldly—are kept in perpetual remembrance and their ideas are constantly refreshed.”

The sensitive person feels this emotion when he reads *A Child's Garden of Verses* and *Little-Folk Lyrics*. Stevenson and Sherman write almost entirely from the child's stand-

point; they see the world through the questioning eyes of a real child. It is due to the fact that they reproduce with such minute fidelity the capricious moods and the wayward fancies of children that their verses are so attractive to mature readers.

Both poets usually wrote in quatrains. Of the two, Mr. Sherman has the more variety. Both are careful to avoid inversions and long, complex sentences, the end of each line or each couplet usually marking the end of the phrase. Both avoid slang and colloquial language, both have the artist's feeling for fine diction; yet in both the style is easy and familiar. Neither "talks down" to children, yet both confine themselves to language within the comprehension of the average child of eight or ten; neither confuses childishness and childlikeness. Incidentally, it is interesting to note the resemblance between the favorite stanza form of children's poetry and that of the popular ballads—between the form of the two, not the subject matter.

Mr. Sherman's favorite themes are: The Months; Phenomena of the Weather and Seasons; Animate Nature, especially birds and flowers. Let us briefly examine the three.

Poems on the Months. These are twelve in number, one for each month. The poems are beautiful in themselves and are, as a group, unmatched in children's poetry, although not a few children's poets have essayed the same subject. All of these poems are worth teaching and memorizing. Children find keen pleasure in marching along with the months as the year progresses, in constructing a poetical calendar. A representative poem in this group is *May*, but others are quite as enjoyable.

Poems on the Weather and Natural Phenomena. To the observant, home-keeping child of Mr. Sherman's volume, the

panorama of the seasons, the kaleidoscopic transformations of the weather, furnish much food for fancy. The wind, the frost, snow, clouds, the rain and the rainbow, sunlight and shadow, "seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night,"—all are full of beauty and suggestiveness. And it is in this group of poems that Mr. Sherman's insight into child nature is most acute and his fancifulness most exquisite. What child does not brood over the mysterious phenomena of the elements, and invent explanations to satisfy his peering, prying intellect? And what child does not find the clue to every mystery in personification? To him the frost is a miracle wrought by fairies, the lightning is the arrow of an invisible archer, the leaves scattered by the wind are romping sprites, the stars are lamps for gnomes and elves in the sky. That is the way the primitive peoples accounted for movements and changes in Nature, and that is the way in which the child's mind reads the riddles that Nature is continually propounding.

Mr. Sherman's little boy evidently prefers the winter; at least some of his prettiest fancies cluster around that season. Here is one of the best.

SNOW SONG

Over valley, over hill,
Hark the shepherd piping shrill!
Driving all the white flocks forth
From the far folds of the North.

Blow, Wind, blow,
Weird melodies you play,
Following your flocks that go
Across the world today.

How they hurry, how they crowd
When they hear the music loud!

Grove and lane and meadow full
Sparkle with their shining wool.
Blow, Wind, blow,
Until the forest ring:
Teach the eaves the tunes you know,
And make the chimneys sing!

Hither, thither, up and down
Every highway of the town,
Huddling close, the white flocks all
Gather at the shepherd's call.
Blow, Wind, blow
Upon your pipes of joy;
All your sheep the flakes of snow
And you their shepherd boy!

Animate Nature, especially Birds and Flowers. This is the theme of the third division of Sherman's children's poems. In his interesting book, *The Making of Poetry*, Dr. Arthur H. R. Fairchild constructs a graded list of the images of poetry in ascending scale, as follows: stone, earth, fire, water, plant, animal, bird, man. That is, from these eight classes the poet selects his material, in the order named; and into them he projects his personality—less into stone, more into plants, most into man. I suspect that is generally true—in poetry written for adults. But children's poetry makes little use of man as a theme. Analysis of character; motives, passions, the inextricable mingling of good and evil, the clashing of opposing personalities—of this, for all it is the highest theme of poetry for men and women, children's poetry takes little account. If Doctor Fairchild were to arrange a scale of themes for children's poetry, he would have to place man farther down in the list, or omit him altogether; and he would have to give to plants and animals, and especially to flowers and birds, the highest station. The child is, in

deriving exquisite pleasure from "untwisting all the chains that tie" the beautiful fancies together.

In any attempt to appraise children's poetry, *Little-Folk Lyrics* must be regarded as a faithful interpretation and an artistic expression of certain fundamental qualities and thoughts of childhood. In dignity, sweetness, melody, and fancifulness, Mr. Sherman's poems deserve a high place in our affections and in our "Golden Treasury of Children's Poetry."

CHAPTER TWELVE

LAURA ELIZABETH RICHARDS

OF the fifteen children's poets analyzed in these essays, only seven are women. Of those seven only three were mothers, and as poets for children these three are not the finest. One would naturally suppose that mother love would have inspired a great deal of children's poetry. One would suppose that the unique experience of motherhood, and the knowledge of children and the love for children which is the heritage of motherhood, would be the source and motive of the choicest poetry in the children's anthology. One would suppose that the interests and activities of one's own children would be the most fertile soil for the growth of children's song and rhyme and story.

With a moment's reflection we discover our error. Mother love finds its highest and most serene and satisfying expression, not in writing for children, but in ministering to them; not in composing songs for imaginary or memory children, but in singing some one else's songs to one's own children; not in brooding on children's emotions and qualities and tastes and characteristics, but in bending over really-for-sure Willie's and Annie's. Motherhood is a most absorbing profession. There is little time or desire to write children's poetry when life is filled with children's love and children's troubles, with children's appetites and sleep and play, with stubbed toes and lost marbles, torn clothes, and—and buttons! Poor Charles Lamb may have the solace of his *Dream Children*, may see

their unborn faces shine
Beside the never-lighted fire.

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That is an insipid joy compared with the sight of one's own children dreaming. The mother does not need the empty pleasure of producing poetry for children; she is too happily engrossed with rearing children. It is not the farmer that rhapsodizes over nature, it is not the soldier that makes the battle songs, it is not the toper that writes the convivial verses: they are too absorbed in the actualities of farming, fighting, and tippling to find delight in the expression of their emotions. And usually it is not the mother that writes children's literature—for reasons which are summed up pretty well by the child who was asked, upon her return from a party, if she had enjoyed herself: "I don't know yet; I've been too busy to think about that"—a remark that may be placed alongside Wordsworth's famous dictum: "Poetry is emotion *recollected in tranquillity*."

Laura Elizabeth Richards is not only an exception to the general rule, but a very striking exception. She is the mother of seven children and the author of fifty books for children—seven books for each child. Among these fifty books are three volumes of children's poetry: *In My Nursery* (1890), *The Hurdy-Gurdy* (1902), and *The Piccolo* (1906). Many other poems of Mrs. Richards' are in the volumes *Five-Minute Stories* (1891) and *More Five-Minute Stories* (1903). The first of these five volumes is published by Little, Brown and Company; the others by Dana, Estes and Company. Since the earliest volume contains, in my opinion, the best specimens of our poet's work, I shall quote largely from it, though what I shall say applies almost equally well to the other volumes. Of her prose writings, it is enough to say here that *The Joyous Story of Toto*, *Captain January*, and *Melody* are among her most popular stories.

Mrs. Richards was born in 1850. She was well endowed;

for her father was Samuel Gridley Howe, philanthropist, patriot, author, teacher of the blind Laura Bridgeman; and her mother was Julia Ward Howe, author of *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*, one of the most talented and gracious of women. To have in one's veins the blood of such parents is to receive a rich endowment from heredity; and to be reared under the love and tuition of such parents is to obtain a splendid equipment from education and environment. It must afford Mrs. Richards keen pleasure to realize that she has paid to the full the debt owed to her parents, paid it as they would desire: in making the world of childhood richer and happier.

Mrs. Richards has a keen sense of rhythm. Her lines scan according to the rules for quantitative verse—and quantitative verse is the kind she usually writes. The sense of rhythm appears early in a child's life; but if it is not nourished on verse and song, it soon disappears. It is a fairy gift: not being used, it fades away. Mrs. Richards' early appearing feeling for rhythm was discerned and developed by her mother. "I was raised on Lear," she says. "Much of my sense of rhythm and music," she writes to me, "is due to my beloved mother, who sang me through my own childhood"; and in the dedicatory poem of *In My Nursery* she acknowledges gratefully and graciously her indebtedness to her mother's "silver-singing voice." Doubtless, Mrs. Richards does owe much of her sense of rhythm to her mother; but she owes almost as much, I believe, to her children. If she was raised on Lear, she "raised her babies on Carroll and Stevenson," which was as good schooling for her as for the babies. In a sense, she is a poet of childhood because she was a mother of children. Other poets are most inspired while walking or smoking or sitting in a favorite

seat; Mrs. Richards is most inspired when she has a baby in her arms. When she was asked how she composes, she replied: "I begin to sing to my babies, often making an air, or what passes for an air, to fit the words. As there were seven babies, there are many verses. By far the best of my verse came in this way, spontaneously." This, by the by, accounts in part for the Mother Goose rhythm in Mrs. Richards' verses, for the Mother Goose jingles must have developed in about this same way. When Mrs. Richards issues another volume of poems—as her admirers hope she will—I suggest that in the dedicatory poem she acknowledge her indebtedness to her children for finishing what her mother began.

At any rate, Mrs. Richards' feeling for rhythm is remarkably strong and accurate. Let me quote a nonsense poem to illustrate. As you read it (aloud, of course), notice the sprightliness and spontaneity, the rhythmic recurrence of the beats, which is emphasized by the alliteration. Notice also that, though the movement is regular, the number of syllables in the feet is quite irregular. It is almost as good, in this respect, as Mother Goose—no higher praise can be bestowed.

THE PHRISKY PHROG

Now list, oh! list to the piteous tale
Of the Phrisky Phrog and the Sylvan Snayle;
Of their lives and their loves, their joys and their woes,
And all about them that any one knows.

The Phrog lived down in a grewsome bog,
The Snayle in a hole in the end of a log;
And they loved each other so fond and true,
They didn't know what in the world to do.

For the Snayle declared 'twas too cold and damp
For a lady to live in a grewsome swamp;
While her lover replied, that a hole in a log
Was no possible place for a Phrisky Phrog.

“Come down! come down, my beautiful Snayle!
With your helegant horns and your tremulous tail;
Come down to my bower in the blossomy bog,
And be happy with me,” said the Phrisky Phrog.

“Come up, come up, to my home so sweet,
Where there's plenty to drink, and the same to eat;
Come up where the cabbages bloom in the vale,
And be happy with me,” said the Sylvan Snayle.

But he wouldn't come, and she wouldn't go,
And so they could never be married, you know;
Though they loved each other so fond and true,
They didn't know what in the world to do.

Undoubtedly it is in the nonsense vein that Mrs. Richards excels. Her gayety, her humorous fancifulness, her ability and agility in rhyming the most absurdly unrhymable words, her delight in alliteration and the lighter, brighter aspects of versification, her unerring use of quantitative rhythm—all this equips her completely for the composition of this delightful species of poetry.

But she has not confined herself to nonsense verse; she has written much in serious mood. Here is one of her prettiest lullabies.

ANOTHER “GOOD-NIGHT”

Birds, birds, in the linden-tree,
Low, low, let your music be.
Bees, bees, in the garden bloom,
Hushed, hushed, be your drowsy hum.
Wind, wind, through the lattice waft

Still, still, thy breathing soft.
 Flowers, sweet be the breath you shed;
 Two little children are going to bed.

Eyes, eyes, 'neath your curtains white,
 Veiled, veiled, be the sunny light.
 Lips, lips, like the roses red,
 Soft, soft, be your sweet prayers said.
 Feet, feet, that have danced all day,
 Now, now, must your dancing stay.
 Low, low, lay each golden head:
 Two little children are going to bed.

Here is another on the same theme, but in quite a different spirit. The refrain, with its swinging rhythm, its repetitions, its suggestion of low-toned, monotonous crooning, is very effective. It should be recited, or chanted, after each stanza.

JOHNNY'S BY-LOW SONG

Here on our rock-away horse we go,
 Johnny and I, to a land we know,—
 Far away in the sunset gold,
 A lovelier land than can be told.

Refrain

Where all the flowers go niddlety nod,
 Non, nod, niddlety nod;
 Where all the flowers go niddlety nod,
 And all the birds sing by-low.
 Lullaby, lullaby, by-low.

The gates are ivory set with pearls,
 One for the boys, and one for the girls;
 So shut your bonny two eyes of blue,
 Or else they will never let you through.

(Refrain)

But what are the children all about?
 There's never a laugh and never a shout.
 Why, they all fell asleep, dear, long ago;
 For how could they keep awake, you know?

(*Refrain*)

And each little brown or golden head
 Is pillowed soft in a satin bed,—
 A satin bed with sheets of silk,
 As soft as down and as white as milk.

(*Refrain*)

The brook in its sleep goes babbling by,
 And the fat little clouds are asleep in the sky;
 And now little Johnny is sleeping too,
 So open the gates and pass him through.

(*Refrain*)

Where all the flowers go niddlety nod,
 Non, nod, niddlety nod;
 Where all the flowers go niddlety nod,
 And all the birds sing by-low.
 Lullaby, lullaby, by-low.

Mrs. Richards' poetry, however, is not confined to lullabies and nonsense songs. It includes almost every phase and experience of child life in the home. Hers is a very versatile muse: it sings of *The First Tooth*, *In the Closet*, *A Party*, *The Corn-popper*, of the swing, the bath, of lessons, play and work—all the activities and interests of normal children. It is in this respect that Mrs. Richards differs most widely from the other poets we have considered. Her best poetry, aside from the nonsense verses, is based on and deals with the home life of a family of healthy, happy children; and her attitude toward them is the attitude of an in-

telligent mother: loving, sympathetic, interested in their interests, chiding them for faults and laughing at their foibles. Her children are normal children, who have the jolliest, freest time imaginable consistent with proper upbringing, who enjoy each other and their home, who love their mother and hate their geography lessons, whose life is full of play and pleasure, whose individualities are respected and cultivated. It is a happy, sensible, successful home that Mrs. Richards presents in her verses—which is not least among the values of her work.

Of course, Mrs. Richards loves children and understands them, and children love and understand her. Some of her verses are among the favorites in the schoolroom and are even more popular in the home. As a poet of the nursery, as a “poet of common life” among children, as a poet of gay nonsense and lively fun, as a poet of child life from the mother’s outlook and with the mother’s insight, she is unsurpassed. She combines the facile rhythm of Mother Goose with the grotesque humor of Lear and Carroll, and with the smiling tenderness, the intuitive understanding, the comprehensive love, of a mother. Although she herself calls her lyre only a hurdy-gurdy, well may she claim a place among the children’s poets.

SELECTIONS FROM LAURA ELIZABETH RICHARDS

Once I longed to be a poet;
Longed to touch the lovely lyre;
Joy celestial, I would know it,
Holy rage and tragic fire.
So I twanged amain, while swelled
Loud my carol, loud and wordy,
Till, glancing at the thing I held,—
Lo, it was a hurdy-gurdy!

Turn, my hurdy-gurdy, turn!
Not for thee the songs of wonder;
Not for thee the words that burn,
Not for thee the chords that thunder.
Nay! but if thy reedy trill,
Piping gay as morning birdie,
Bring the children dancing still,
Turn, oh turn, my hurdy-gurdy!

Look! the poet stands apart,
With his clear eyes raised to heaven.
Pain and rapture shake his heart,
But the best to grief is given.
Lonely stands he there and high,
Pointing upward, stern and single:
Hurdy-gurdy, thou and I
With the jostling crowds must mingle.

Turn, my hurdy-gurdy, turn!
Raise the song that breaks in laughter!
Goodly wages we shall earn,
If a child come tripping after.
Little maids, all cherry-ripe,
Little lads, all brown and sturdy,
While they follow at thy pipe,
Turn, still turn, my hurdy-gurdy.

Sweet are tears that lovers shed;
Thrilling falls the kiss of passion;

Deep the note that mourns the dead;
 Wildly clear the bugle's fashion.
 Crashing goes life's symphony,
 Sobbing, laughing, pain and pleasure;
 Hurdy-gurdy, thou and I,
 Keep we true our tiny measure!

Turn, my hurdy-gurdy, turn!
 Sing, whatever skies be dreary,
 Let no child in sadness yearn;
 Keep the babies bright and cheery!
 Every day be glad and gay,
 Rosy, cosy, cream-and-curdy;
 Dancing, glancing down the way,
 Turn, still turn, my hurdy-gurdy!

THE LITTLE GNOME

Once there lived a little gnome
 Who had made his little home
 Right down in the middle of the earth, earth, earth.
 He was full of fun and frolic,
 But his wife was melancholic,
 And he never could divert her into mirth, mirth, mirth.

He had tried her with a monkey
 And a parrot and a donkey,
 And a pig that squealed whene'er he pulled its tail, tail,
 tail.
 But though he laughed himself
 Into fits, the jolly elf,
 Still his wifey's melancholy did not fail, fail, fail.

"I will hie me," said the gnome,
 "From my worthy earthy home;
 I will go among the dwellings of the men, men, men.
 Something funny there must be,
 That will make her say, 'He, he!'
 I will find it and will bring it her again, 'gain, 'gain."

So he traveled here and there,
And he saw the Blinking Bear,
And the Pattypol whose eyes are in his tail, tail, tail.
And he saw the Linking Loon,
Who was playing his bassoon,
And the Octopus a-waltzing with the whale, whale, whale.

He saw the Chingo Chee,
And a lovely sight was he,
With a ringlet and a ribbon on his nose, nose, nose;
And the Baggie, and the Wogg,
And the Cantilunar Dog,
Who was throwing cotton-flannel at his foes, foes, foes.

All these the little gnome
Transported to his home,
And set them down before his weeping wife, wife, wife.
But she only cried and cried,
And she sobbywobbed and sighed,
Till she really was in danger of her life, life, life.

Then the gnome was in despair,
And he tore his purple hair,
And he sat down in sorrow on a stone, stone, stone.
"I, too," he said, "will cry,
Till I tumble down and die,
For I've had enough of laughing all alone, 'lone, 'lone."

His tears they flowed away,
Like a rivulet at play,
With a bubble, gubble, rubble, o'er the ground, ground,
ground.
But when this wifey saw,
She loudly cried "Haw, haw!
Here at last is something funny you have found, found,
found."

She laughed, "Ho, ho! he, he!"
And she chuckled loud with glee,
And she wiped away her little husband's tears, tears, tears.
And since then, through wind and weather,

They have said "He, he!" together,
For several hundred thousand merry years, years, years.

GEOGRAPHI

(Air: *There was a maid in my countree.*)

There was a man in Manitoba,
The only man that ever was thar;
His name was Nicholas Jones McGee,
And he loved a maid in Mirimichi.

Chorus

Sing ha! ha! ha! for Manitoba!
Sing he! he! he! for Mirimichi!
Sing hi! hi! hi! for Geographi!
And that's the lesson for you and me.

There was a man in New Mexico,
He lost his grandmother out in the snow;
But his heart was light, and his ways were free,
So he bought him another in Santa Fe.

Chorus

Sing ho! ho! ho! for New Mexico!
Sing he! he! he! for Santa Fe!
Sing hi! hi! hi! for Geographi!
And that's the lesson for you and me.

There was a man in Austra-li-a,
He sat and wept on the new-mown hay;
He jumped on the tail of a kangaroo,
And rode till he came to Kalamazoo.

Chorus

Sing hey! hey! hey! for Austra-li-a!
Sing hoo! hoo! hoo! for Kalamazoo!
Sing hi! hi! hi! for Geographi!
And that's the lesson for me and you.

There was a man in Jiggerajum,
He went to sea in a kettle-drum;
He sailed away to the Salisbury Shore,
And I never set eyes on that man any more.

Chorus

Sing hum! hum! hum! for Jiggerajum!
Sing haw! haw! haw! for the Salisbury Shore!
Sing hi! hi! hi! for Geographi!
And that's the lesson the whole world o'er.

JUMBO JEE

There were some kings, in number three,
Who built the tower of Jumbo Jee.
They built it up to a monstrous height,
At eleven o'clock on a Thursday night.

They built it up for forty miles,
With mutual bows and pleasing smiles;
And then they sat on the edge to rest,
And partook of lunch with a cheerful zest.

And first they ate of the porkly pie,
And wondered why they had built so high;
And next they drank of the ginger wine,
Which gave their noses a regal shine.

They drank to the health of Jumbo Jee,
Until they could neither hear nor see,
They drank to the health of Jumbo Land,
Until they could neither walk nor stand.

They drank to the health of Jumbo Tower
Until they really could drink no more;
And then they sank in a blissful swoon,
And flung their crown at the rising moon.

ALICE'S SUPPER

Far down in the meadow the wheat grows green,
And the reapers are whetting their sickles so keen;
And this is the song that I hear them sing,
While cheery and loud their voices ring:
“ ’Tis the finest wheat that ever did grow!
And it is for Alice’s supper, ho! ho!”

Far down in the valley the old mill stands,
And the miller is rubbing his dusty white hands;
And these are the words of the miller's lay,
As he watches the millstones a-grinding away:
“ ’Tis the finest flour that money can buy,
And it is for Alice's supper, hi! hi!”

Downstairs in the kitchen the fire doth glow,
And Maggie is kneading the soft white dough,
And this is the song that she's singing today,
While merry and busy she's working away:
“’Tis the finest dough, by near or by far,
And it is for Alice's supper, ha! ha!”

And now to the nursery comes Nannie at last,
And what in her hand is she bringing so fast?
'Tis a plate full of something all yellow and white,
And she sings as she comes with her smile so bright:
“ 'Tis the best bread-and-butter I ever did see!
And it is for Alice's supper, he! he!”

JINGLE

The sugar dog lay in the toe of the stocking,
And rocking,
As if in a cradle, he called to the drum
To come.
But the ball and the gray flannel pig were too cunning
And running,
With Noah's Ark, filled the stocking quite up
To the top.

The jumping-jack could not get into the stocking.
 How shocking!
He had to climb up on the foot of the bed
 Instead.
But the rag doll was wise, and while baby was sleeping,
 Came creeping,
And nestling under the sweet baby arm,
 Lay warm.

THE PICCOLO

Piccolo's a little pipe,
 Will you hear me play on it?
Age may have me in his gripe,
 Still I toot away on it.
Children, come and dance with me!
Merry moments you shall see;
Life's a jinking jollity,
 All the childish way on it!

Piccolo's a little pipe;
 Will you learn to play on it?
Wait until your years are ripe,
 Then you'll say your say on it.
Youth may strive and youth may sigh,
Manhood build both broad and high,
Age and childhood, you and I,
 Still we'll have our way on it!

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

LUCY LARCOM

AMONG the children's poets are a few who, by native endowment, by the divination of genius, together with a fortunate combination of inspiration and circumstance, have been able to penetrate into the innermost recesses of the child's heart, there to sing songs whose echoes never cease to reverberate. These are the heaven-sent, the apostles, the Blakes, the Christina Rossettis, the Stevensons. There are others, a somewhat more numerous company, yet still a handful, whose poetic talents, whose consecration and services, moved by a large love and sympathy for children, have given them a shrine in the child's temple of art. These are the earth-born, the disciples: to this group belongs Lucy Larcom.

Lucy Larcom (born 1824, died 1893) is accorded short shrift in the general history of American Literature. The author of *Hannah Binding Shoes*, *An Idyll of Work*, a few beautiful hymns; the friend of John Greenleaf Whittier: this is her rating. But as a writer for children, she may justly claim a more generous meed of praise. *A New England Girlhood*, one of the most sincere and inspiring autobiographies ever written for girls, and *Childhood Songs*, a book of poetry for children, entitle her to high rank among writers for young folks.

Miss Larcom collaborated with Whittier in *Child-Life in Prose*, and also in *Child-Life in Poetry*, one of the earliest and, to this day, one of the best anthologies of poetry for children. She was joint editor, with Gail Hamilton and John T. Trowbridge, of *Our Young Folks*, and was for many

years a contributor to *St. Nicholas* and *The Youth's Companion*. But it is upon *Childhood Songs* that Miss Larcom's fame as a children's poet rests. It is a little book of about fifty poems, somewhat marred by inane illustrations. This volume, published by Houghton Mifflin Company, together with *A New England Girlhood* and Daniel Dulany Addison's *Lucy Larcom: Life, Letters, and Diary*, provide the student with sufficient knowledge of Miss Larcom's life and personality.

Certain poems in *Childhood Songs* illustrate the fact that not all poems *about* children are poems *for* children. The author herself realized this, for in the prefatory note to the volume she says: "In naming these little poems *Childhood Songs*, one especial thought was that not all of them were written from the child's point of view, but as one may write who in mature life retains a warm sympathy with childhood, through a vivid memory of her own." It is an uncommon power, this power to see things as children see them. It requires the closest adjustment of memory, imagination, love, insight, and good sense. It is of no avail to cry out, "Backward, turn backward, O Time, in your flight"; Time does not turn back, for all our pleadings. Do you remember the difficulty Alice had in getting into the garden? She was too large to go through the garden door; then after she had drunk the contents of the bottle and found herself small enough to go through, she discovered that she was too small to reach the key on the table. When you are small enough, you haven't the key; when you have the key, you aren't small enough.

Lucy Larcom, like all good poets for children, has the key of understanding and maturity and artistry, yet is small enough to creep through the door back into childhood. She

says, in the preface to *A New England Girlhood*: "I can see very distinctly the child that I was, and I know how the world looked to her, far off as she is now. She seems to me like my little sister, at play in a garden where I can at any time return and find her." It is true that occasionally, as she says, she writes poems about children, such poems as *Moonshine*, for example, or *A little Cavalier*, or *A Face in the Tongs*; but most of her poems are veritable children's songs.

Childhood Songs is dedicated to "Prince Hal and Little Queen Maude." Miss Larcom, like other children's poets, needed the presence of children to carry her back to her own childhood and to furnish the inspiration and theme of her songs. Frank Dempster Sherman dedicates *Little-Folk Lyrics* to a younger Dempster; Miss Rossetti, in her poems, remembered the baby who suggested them; Lewis Carroll declares his indebtedness to Alice Liddell; Mrs. Richards tells us that her songs were composed as she sang to her children. We employ no figure of speech when we say that children renew our youth: that is precisely what they do. Observing them, we call back, if but dimly and imperfectly, our youthful selves. When we see them at play, we travel back along the path of years to our own childhood and in memory we, too, are at play. At times, we scrutinize our youthful selves almost as if they were distinct individuals; at the same time, we feel a mysterious love and sympathy for them, an understanding of the little fellows, a longing to pat them on the head and draw them close to us, a feeling of strangely mingled affection and amusement. Out of some such feeling as this are children's poems born.

But there is little suggestion of this mood in *Childhood Songs*. Most of the poems are concrete and specific, free

from mysticism, from introspection. What could be a more direct poetic exposition of childish thought than, for example, *The Rivulet*?

Miss Larcom finds pleasure in nature, in its flowers and birds, in all its tender, quiet creations. Reared in a little country town, she early formed a tenacious attachment for wild flowers and for woods and fields. She says, "Flowers had begun to bring me messages from their own world when I was a very small child, and they never withdrew their companionship from my thoughts." This love of Nature was strengthened by her childhood reading. The verses of Wordsworth, Watts, Coleridge, Bryant, and Whittier, were her favorites. But it was not the passion and storm, the grandeur and magnificence of Nature that appealed to her; it was rather Nature's calmness and serenity, the quiet beauty and pastoral charm, that pleased her best. And in this, also, she resembles other children's poets. They seldom sing of the vastness and terror of Nature. We do not read such lines as "Roll on, thou dark and deep blue ocean, roll!" in poetry written for children. We do not catch a glimpse of the "Kingly spirit throned among the hills" in any verse addressed to them. Doubtless there is a reason for this; doubtless children are most likely to discern beauty in that which is merely pretty and pleasing. But I am convinced that occasionally they should have their imagination aroused by the wild and picturesque and awful. Life is not all purling brooks and flowers; there are floods and mountains and great, dark forests. Are we to hear nothing of these? In *Childhood Songs* we never hear of them. We may, however, expect to hear a sincere, natural love for the milder, blander aspects of Nature, of "everything that pretty bin."

As a specimen of Miss Larcom's Nature verse, read the familiar *Red-Top and Timothy*. The artistic and consistent elaboration of a pretty fancy and the appropriately rapid and delicate rhythm make the poem notable.

RED-TOP AND TIMOTHY

Red-Top and Timothy

Come here in the spring;
 Light spears out of emerald sheaths
 Everywhere they swing.
 Harmless little soldiers,
 On the field they play,
 Nodding plumes and crossing blades
 All the livelong day.

Timothy and Red-Top

Bring their music-band;
 Some with scarlet epaulettes
 Strutting stiff and grand;
 Some in sky-blue jackets;
 Some in vests of pink;
 Red and white their leader's coat,
 Restless Bob-o'-link!

Red-Top's airy feathers

Tremble to his notes,
 In themselves an orchestra;
 Then a thousand throats
 Set the winds a-laughing,
 While the saucy thing
 Anywhere on spike or spear,
 Sways himself to sing.

Red-Top and Timothy

Have a mortal foe;
 There's a giant with a scythe
 Comes and lays them low;
 Shuts them in barn-prisons,

Spares not e'en Sweet Clover;
Bob-o'-link leads off his band,
Now the campaign's over.

There is a note of seriousness in many of Miss Larcom's verses. Prince Hal and Little Queen Maude are continually being admonished by their New England foster-mother to remember that "life is real, life is earnest." It is not that Miss Larcom, like Blake, feels the contrast between the innocence and happiness of childhood and the sin and sadness of maturity; it is not that she, like Miss Rossetti, is a devotee of "Our Ladies of Sorrow." It is that her tastes are deeply religious. "Almost the first decided taste in my life," she writes, "was the love of hymns." Before she was five years old, she could repeat more than a hundred hymns by heart—"by heart" is the exact phrase in this case. She tells how, as a little child, she tried to assuage her widowed mother's grief by singing her favorite hymns.

Her religious bent is shown in her working days at the Lowell mills, in her experience as a teacher, in her letters, and in her published writings. Naturally, it reveals itself in her poems for children, not obtrusively, not too didactically, not in a solemn Puritanical vein. It reveals itself rather in a certain serious note, in a feeling that, while child life should be happy and frolicsome, it should also upon occasion be sober and reflective; that, while the child should enjoy the pleasure and play of the moment, he should not be utterly regardless of duty and service. Several of the poems in *Childhood Songs* might serve to illustrate this serious spirit. I have chosen a familiar one. As is Miss Larcom's custom, the moral is based on a natural phenomenon; the scene or situation is first made attractive and interesting, and then the lesson is introduced. The poem,

it will be noticed, does not present merely a lesson of politeness or good manners, in the Ann and Jane Taylor fashion; it touches upon a deep spiritual truth.

IF I WERE A SUNBEAM

“If I were a sunbeam,
I know what I'd do:
I would seek white lilies
Rainy woodlands through.
I would steal among them,
Softest light I'd shed,
Until every lily
Raised its drooping head.

“If I were a sunbeam,
I know where I'd go:
Into lowliest hovels,
Dark with want and woe;
Till sad hearts looked upward,
I would shine and shine;
Then they'd think of heaven,
Their sweet home and mine.”

Art thou not a sunbeam,
Child, whose life is glad
With an inner radiance
Sunshine never had?
O, as God hath blessed thee,
Scatter rays divine!
For there is no sunbeam
But must die or shine.

Even when Miss Larcom touches upon a theme like kindness to animals, she does not allow herself to drift into mawkishness or sentimentality. How delicately and deftly she can treat such a theme may be seen by an examination of *The*

Brown Thrush, which of all her poems is perhaps the one that is most popular among children.

THE BROWN THRUSH

There's a merry brown thrush sitting up in the tree.

“He's singing to me! He's singing to me!”

And what does he say, little girl, little boy?

“O, the world's running over with joy!

Don't you hear? Don't you see?

Hush! Look! In my tree

I'm as happy as happy can be!”

And the brown thrush keeps singing, “A nest do you see,

And five eggs, hid by me in the juniper tree?

Don't meddle! don't touch! little girl, little boy,

Or the world will lose some of its joy!

Now I'm glad! now I'm free!

And I always will be,

If you never bring sorrow to me.”

So the merry brown thrush sings away in the tree,

To you and to me, to you and to me;

And he sings all the day, little girl, little boy,

“O, the world's running over with joy!

But long it won't be,

Don't you know? don't you see?

Unless we are as good as can be!”

But although Miss Larcom knows how to be serious without being solemn, her poems are not all serious. Hal and Maude are fond of play and have their fun, good store of it. They make whistles, they pick berries, they swing on the branches of the birch tree. All the poems in *Childhood Songs* show that the author would have children indulge to the full their normal instinct for games and sports. One of the most interesting poems in this group is the familiar *Swinging on a Birch Tree*.

All Lucy Larcom's poems impress the reader with a sense of her love for children. In one of her letters, she says: "I think I have the mother-feeling—ideally at least; a woman is not a woman quite, who lacks it, be she married or single. The children—God bless them—belong to the mother-heart that beats in all true women. They seem even dearer, sometimes, because I have none of my own to love and be loved by, for there is a great emptiness that only child-love can fill." A passage in her diary expresses a similar idea: "Homes where little children are, are always beautiful to me, for the children's sake, if for nothing else. Cherub-like or impish, the little folks fascinate me always. If I were a mother, I am afraid I should never want my baby to grow up."

The maternal instinct in Miss Larcom finds expression in almost all her poems of childhood. It is responsible for the following beautiful lullaby, full of soft, delicate sounds and a rhythmic movement suggestive of the swinging of the tree-cradle.

IN THE TREE-TOP

"Rock-a-by, baby, up in the tree-top!"

Mother his blanket is spinning;
And a light little rustle that never will stop,
Breezes and boughs are beginning.
Rock-a-by, baby, swinging so high!
Rock-a-by!

"When the wind blows, then the cradle will rock."

Hush! now it stirs in the bushes;
Now with a whisper, a flutter of talk,
Baby and hammock it pushes.
Rock-a-by, baby! shut, pretty eye!
Rock-a-by!

“Rock with the boughs, rock-a-by, baby dear!”

Leaf-tongues are singing and saying;

Mother she listens and sister is near,

Under the tree softly playing.

Rock-a-by baby! mother's close by!

Rock-a-by!

Weave him a beautiful dream, little breeze!

Little leaves, nestle around him!

He will remember the song of the trees,

When age with silver has crowned him.

Rock-a-by, baby! wake by and by!

Rock-a-by!

Lucy Larcom is not a supreme poet, not even a great poet—no admirer, however fervent, should make that claim. She is great neither in her poetic conceptions, nor in the art of verse-making. She has neither the great vision of a master-thinker nor the lyric voice of a master-singer. But she is sincere and honest with herself and her readers. She does not patronize children, does not pretend or condescend. She does not choose her words according to the theory that a short word is better than a long one; the theory that a child must necessarily comprehend all that he may apprehend. Her philosophy of poetry may be given in her own words: “Reason and observation, as well as my own experience, assure me that it is great poetry—even the greatest—which the youngest crave and upon which they may be fed, because it is the simplest. Nature does not write down her sunsets, her starry skies, her mountains, and her oceans in some smaller style, to suit the comprehension of little children; they do not need any such dilution.”

Not supreme, then, nor great, even; but important enough to be here listed among the children's poets. By virtue of her love for children and her understanding of them, by vir-

tue of her power to summon back her own childhood and cast over it the sweet wizardry of poetic art, by virtue of her goodness and sincerity and her even balance of joyousness and seriousness, by virtue of her talents as a versifier—Lucy Larcom should be acclaimed as one of the blessed company of children's poets, who go singing down the ages followed and surrounded by successive generations of happy little children.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

CELIA THAXTER

FOR our purpose, in a study of children's poets, the events of Celia (Laighton) Thaxter's life (1835-1894) have but slight importance, compared with the environment in which her childhood was spent. "We are a part of all that we have met," and particularly of all that we have met in childhood. If we could trace almost any quality we possess, any trait or tendency, prejudice or bias, back along the half-obliterated, winding path that we traveled from childhood to maturity, doubtless we should find the source and origin of it in some childhood experience—often an experience that may have seemed insignificant to our parents or even to ourselves, but which is now seen to be the well-spring of much that is characteristic and fundamental in us. Out of this emotion and that situation, this love and that hate, this boy and that dog, a day of fishing and an old pocket-knife, a schoolhouse and a song and a willow whistle and the odor of apples, a game and a stone-bruise, out of all this, snatched up, it would seem, at random, Fate weaves our disposition and our character; and there is no science that will enable us to determine whether any scene or person or incident of childhood will strike our lives only to glance off into oblivion, or will make on us an indelible impression for good or for evil—no science that can

Look into the seeds of Time
And say which grains will grow, and which will not.

But if you would know why the man is this sort of man and not the other sort, ask not his old-time friends or his early

teachers or even his parents: ask his childhood memories. If they will, they can reveal the secret.

Though their splendor may have ceased to be,
Each played her sovereign part in making me.

When we search into Celia Loughton's girlhood for an explanation of what was individual and unusual in Celia Thaxter's womanhood, the significant detail, the fact that looms up largest, is that she spent her childhood on a lighthouse island off the coast of New Hampshire. Of course, we can trace the influence of this early environment in the subject matter of her verse and prose; but that would be expected: there is more in it than that. The strong, sweet serenity, the suggestion of the huge and the vast in almost everything she wrote, the sweep of her imagination, her deep, thoughtful sentiment—most of this is the product of her early environment. Mark Twain was not more deeply influenced by the Mississippi River than Celia Thaxter by the ocean. As she says in one of her delightful letters to James T. Fields: "I believe, I am *afraid*, I never can put my heart into anything that doesn't belong to the sea."

Let us examine first, then, her sea poems. Of the seventy poems in Mrs. Thaxter's poems for children (*Stories and Poems for Children*, Houghton Mifflin Company), at least a dozen have as their theme and inspiration the sea—the sea as viewed from White Island or Appledore. Mrs. Thaxter feels the greatness of the sea, its might and mystery and majesty, as I have said. But in her children's poems you get no more than a slight hint of that aspect of the sea, which is scarcely a theme for young children, as Mrs.

Thaxter—mother, aunt, and grandmother—knew right well. She chose a phase of the sea which is not only poetic and original and dear to her heart but also attractive to children: the birds of the sea.

So far as I know, no poet has sung of as many sea-birds as Mrs. Thaxter, perhaps because none knew them so well and loved them so fondly. In her collection—her aviary—are the sandpiper, the burgomaster gull, the kittiwake, the shag, the great blue heron, and the albatross—birds which little Celia Loughton must often have observed around the inlets of the Isles of Shoals. The poems paint graphic pictures of the birds, against a background of restless sea and gloomy sky, and all are suffused with the poet's reverent love for the creatures of the air and ocean. Mrs. Thaxter loves the smaller birds because of their weakness, their fragility, as contrasted with the giant violence of the ocean; she loves the stronger birds because of their strength; she loves them all because their flight is over the waters of the sea, because in them are suggestions of the reek of the brine and the magic and might of the great sea.

The Sandpiper, for all it is so familiar, must be quoted to illustrate one kind of Mrs. Thaxter's verse on this subject. What a wonderfully vivid picture it is! The sandpiper, so trustful and confiding, so tiny and weak a creature to be exposed to the fury of a night of storm—I do not know where to find in English or American poetry such another picture. And not even in Robert Burns is there a truer feeling of comradeship with the animal creation than Mrs. Thaxter expresses here. Withal, it is done briefly, with artistic restraint and sincerity. It is one of the children's poems that are worthy of an honored place in any anthology.

THE SANDPIPER

Across the narrow beach we flit,
One little sandpiper and I;
And fast we gather, bit by bit,
The scattered driftwood bleached and dry.
The wild waves reach their hands for it,
The wild wind raves, the tide runs high,
As up and down the beach we flit,—
One little sandpiper and I.

Above our heads the sullen clouds
Scud black and swift across the sky;
Like silent ghosts in misty shrouds
Stand out the white lighthouses high.
Almost as far as eye can reach
I see the close-reefed vessels fly,
As fast we flit along the beach,—
One little sandpiper and I.

I watch him as he skims along
Uttering his sweet and mournful cry;
He starts not at my fitful song,
Or flash of fluttering drapery.
He has no thought of any wrong;
He scans me with a fearless eye.
Such friends are we, well tried and strong,
The little sandpiper and I.

Comrade, where wilt thou be tonight
When the loosed storm breaks furiously?
My driftwood fire will burn so bright!
To what warm shelter canst thou fly?
I do not fear for thee, though wroth
The tempest rushes through the sky:
For are we not God's children both,
Thou, little sandpiper, and I?

Perhaps *The Sandpiper* does represent, as John Burroughs has said, the woman's point of view, as Bryant's

To a Waterfowl represents the man's. But there is no trace of sentimentality in *The Sandpiper*, nor in anything else Celia Thaxter ever wrote. She is, above all, hale and sane. And to get a fair and adequate conception of her complete, rounded personality, you must read such a poem as *The Albatross*, with its broad canvas, its amplitude, its focusing of attention upon the strong and valiant spirit of the "mystic bird."

Though the sad, mysterious birds of wind and water were peculiarly dear to our poet, she was by no means insensible to the beauties and graces of their tamer sisters of forest and meadow. The dove, the yellow-bird, the bluebird, the hyla, the robin, the nightingale, the chickadee, all sing their pretty arias in her garden. Mrs. Thaxter loved all birds. She writes to Feroline Fox: "You know how I love them [the birds]; every other poem I have written has some bird for its subject." Readers of Mrs. Thaxter's letters (*Letters of Celia Thaxter*, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1895), and especially of her letters to Bradford Torrey, will realize that her affection for birds was a veritable passion, not a mere lukewarm liking. In this fervent love of birds Mrs. Thaxter surpasses all children's poets.

Of the natural companions of the birds, the flowers, Mrs. Thaxter is not so truly inspired to sing, though she was fond of flowers and appreciative of their beauty. In fact, she is interested, as a true artist always is, in all out-of-doors, in the seasons and the common aspect of nature. One of her nature poems most liked by children is *Spring*. The poem is full of pretty little touches, it sounds a clear, lyric note, and the imagery is attractive to children.

Among Mrs. Thaxter's verses are a number of well-drawn character sketches of little girls. These are unique in

children's poetry, the nearest approach to them being some of the poems of Jane and Ann Taylor. The Taylors, however, make their character sketches the media for preaching manners and morals, whereas Mrs. Thaxter is usually content to paint the portraits of attractive little girls and let whatever moral there may be fend for itself. In her portrait gallery we find Nikolina, Marjorie, Piccola, Little Asunta, and, finest and loveliest of all, Gustava.

LITTLE GUSTAVA

Little Gustava sits in the sun,
Safe in the porch, and the little drops run
From the icicles under the eaves so fast,
For the bright spring sun shines warm at last,
And glad is little Gustava.

She wears a quaint little scarlet cap,
And a little green bowl she holds in her lap,
Filled with bread and milk to the brim,
And a wreath of marigolds round the rim:
"Ha, ha!" laughs little Gustava.

Up comes her little gray, coaxing cat,
With her little pink nose, and she mews, "What's that?"
Gustava feeds her,—she begs for more;
And a little brown hen walks in at the door;
"Good day!" cries little Gustava.

She scatters crumbs for the little brown hen.
There comes a rush and a flutter, and then
Down fly her little white doves so sweet,
With their snowy wings and their crimson feet:
"Welcome!" cries little Gustava.

So dainty and eager they pick up the crumbs;
But who is this through the doorway comes?
Little Scotch terrier, little dog Rags,

Looks in her face, and his funny tail wags:
“Ha, ha!” laughs little Gustava.

“You want some breakfast, too?” and down
She sets her bowl on the brick floor brown;
And little dog Rags drinks up her milk,
While she strokes his shaggy locks, like silk:
“Dear Rags!” says little Gustava.

Waiting without stood sparrow and crow,
Cooling their feet in the melting snow:
“Won’t you come in, good folks?” she cried.
But they were too bashful, and stayed outside,
Though “Pray come in!” cried Gustava.

So the last she threw them, and knelt on the mat
With doves and biddy and dog and cat.
And her mother came to the open house-door:
“Dear little daughter, I bring you some more,
My merry little Gustava!”

Kitty and terrier, biddy and doves,
All things harmless Gustava loves.
The shy, kind creatures ’tis joy to feed,
And oh, her breakfast is sweet indeed
To happy little Gustava!

Mrs. Thaxter’s love for children is revealed in all her pictures of child life. It is revealed yet more clearly, perhaps, in the half-dozen lullabies in her volume—a favorite form of verse with most children’s poets. Rarely has the anxious and passionate tenderness of maternal love been more vividly and beautifully expressed than in her *Cradle Song* and *A Lullaby*.

Mrs. Thaxter, being mother, aunt, and grandmother, must, of course, give her child readers bits of advice now and then. One would not begrudge her that luxury—she has deserved it. But even here her unfailing good sense is manifest:

she does not emphasize the petty, inconsequential minor morals, nor does she sugar-coat her homiletic medicine; in fact, she prescribes tonics rather than medicine. She talks straight out, in "good set terms," without cant and without subterfuge, with a compelling earnestness and honesty and in striking and forceful phrases, about the fundamental virtues. Of "divine and sacred songs"—there are not many of them in her collection—I prefer *An Open Secret*.

Mrs. Thaxter is rarely humorous, and only now and then, as in *Jack Frost*, is she fanciful. But one must not expect everything: "Take the goods the gods provide thee." If she laughs rarely, she smiles frequently, and her serenity and her profound and inherent faith in the goodness and harmony of life is ample compensation for whatever she may lack of fun. If she has little fancy, she has imagination; if she does not often detect the superficial analogies between things, she is always conscious of the essential kinship, one might even say identity, of all things and phases of life.

It is not difficult to detect faults in Mrs. Thaxter's poetry. Her language, though usually vigorous and suggestive, is rarely figurative; occasionally it is even commonplace. The reader is not often surprised by verbal felicities. Her verse, although even and regular in flow, is at times almost monotonous; her stanza structure is conventional. Yet despite these limitations, the student and lover of children's poetry must give her high ranking as a poet of childhood. She has widened the scope of poetry for children by her bevy of little girls and her flock of sea-birds; she loves children, she understands them and meets them on their own level; she has a wide sympathy and sustained imagination; she is simple and unaffected. She writes to Fields: "The only merit of my small productions lies in their straightforward

simplicity.” Of course, that is not their only merit; but it is a merit that children, above all other mortals, appreciate, and it accounts, in part, for her popularity among children.

Celia Thaxter, the poet, was a grandmother, let us not forget that; and she has the true grandmother attitude toward children. She writes to Clara Rogers: “I don’t think I ever realized what fun was until I became a grandmother.” And again, more seriously: “Oh, I never meant in my old age to become subject to the thrall of a love like this! It is almost dreadful—so absorbing, so stirring down to the deeps.” One of her most forceful poems is entitled *Grandmother to her Grandson*, and throughout her poems for children, a sensitive reader feels this “grandmother” mood and “grandmother” love—enthusiasm restrained by good sense, ardent affection tempered by wisdom—which is a new note in children’s poetry, the nearest resemblance being in the poems of Mrs. Richards.

Sarah Orne Jewett, in the introduction to the volume of Mrs. Thaxter’s stories and poems, sums up the poet’s point of view: “I am sure that if Mrs. Thaxter had lived to complete the arrangement of this book of stories and verses for children, she would have dedicated it to her dear grandchildren and to the little nieces so dear to her heart. I know that she would like to have me stand in her place and say that this book is made for them first of all, and I am sure that it will help those who cannot well remember her to know something of her beautiful generous kindness and delightful gayety, her gift of teaching young eyes to see the flowers and birds; to know her island of Appledore and its sea and sky.”

BIBLIOGRAPHY

(A) ANTHOLOGIES OF CHILDREN'S POETRY

ANTHOLOGIES of children's poetry are so numerous that a student of poetry for children must take them into account. To assist readers in this matter I have brought together descriptive bibliographies of twenty anthologies. Representative anthologies have been chosen so that the different aims of the editors might be indicated, and I have discussed none that did not appear to me to be fairly good. Volumes made specifically for school use have not been considered.

The contents of the anthologies, the point of view of the editors, the elements of strength and weakness, the distinctive features, and the principles by which the poems have been selected and classified, have been summarized in brief outlines. I have quoted, wherever possible, from the prefaces; but I have also, in every instance, stated my own opinion. The books are listed alphabetically according to the names of their respective editors.

CHISHOLM, LOUEY. *The Golden Staircase*. G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, n. d.

This book has no preface; therefore the collector's point of view must be ascertained from a survey of the book itself. The purpose seems to be to present a group of poems for each year. *The Golden Staircase* is, in fact, a series of graded poems. Miss Chisholm has gleaned her selections from the whole field of verse suitable for children and, while reprinting a number of the old favorites, has chosen many verses rarely found in modern collections. Most of the poetry is good literature, and all of it deals with themes of interest to children. The collector has inserted an unusually large number of splendid humorous verses. American authors are not well represented. It is a large collection and one that should be in any good library of children's poetry.

The volume is divided into nine parts, advancing a step with each new part, as the child grows a year older. Within each part, the arrangement seems to have been made entirely on the principle of variety and constant change from one kind of verse to another.

GRAHAME, KENNETH. *The Cambridge Book of Poetry for Young People*. G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1916.

Mr. Grahame's purpose is: "To set up a wicket-gate giving attractive admission to that wide domain ['the whole range of English poetry'] with its woodland glades, its pasture and arable, its walls and scented gardens here and there, and so to its sunlit, and sometimes misty, mountain-tops." He has excluded blank verse and drama, most of the classical poetry of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, dialect verse, poems on death, all the second- and third-rate verse for children, "which is merely verse and nothing more," and poems about children. The collection consists almost entirely of lyric poetry, but the collector presents a variety of subjects, appealing to all classes and types of children and representing a rich diversity of interests. His taste is unerring: there is not a single poem in the volume that one would wish away. Many of the poems found in other anthologies are included in this one, but there are a few in this that one rarely sees elsewhere.

The poems are arranged in three sections: *For the very smallest ones*; *For those a little older*; *For those still older*. Within these divisions the poems are grouped according to subject matter, each group having a title, sometimes a trifle fanciful; but a child could easily find his way about in the book by following these signboards.

HENLEY, WILLIAM ERNEST. *Lyra Heroica: A Book of Verse for Boys*. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1916.

"My purpose has been to choose and sheave a certain number of those achievements in verse which, as expressing the simpler sentiments and the more elemental emotions, might fitly be addressed to such boys—and men, for that matter—as are privileged to use our noble English tongue. . . . To set forth, as only art can, the beauty and the joy of living, the beauty and the blessedness of death, the glory of battle and adventure, the nobility of devotion—to a cause, an ideal, a passion even—the dignity of resistance, the sacred quality of patriotism, that is my ambition here. . . . Addressing myself to boys. I have not scrupled to edit my authors where editing seemed desirable, and I have broken up some of the longer pieces for convenience in reading." This is a splendid

collection within its professed limits. It contains not a few poems generally inaccessible, and all the pieces included express heroism and martial ardor. Longfellow, Whittier, and Whitman are the only American authors who are represented.

The arrangement of the selections is chronological, and extends from Shakespeare to Rudyard Kipling. There is a good index of the authors, and some pages of useful notes.

INGPEN, ROGER. *One Thousand Poems for Children. Revised and Enlarged Edition.* George W. Jacobs and Company, Philadelphia, 1920.

This is one of the most voluminous collections ever made, containing as it does, almost 549 pages of fine print. The first edition was published in 1903. It is not a book for children, but an invaluable one for teachers and librarians, inasmuch as it contains many poems not easily found elsewhere. The editor believes in poetry that is both "pleasant to read and profitable to remember." He says: "The two objects which have primarily been kept in mind are the claim of poetry and the demand of the children; but since the collection is intended chiefly for the pleasure of our boys and girls, the demand of our children has been considered first. . . . The volume embraces poems for children of all ages, from the very little tot to the average child of fifteen years." This anthology is especially rich in the work of the earlier poets for children. A wide variety of themes and poetic styles is presented. Unfortunately the editor's taste is not altogether trustworthy: he has admitted certain poems that are full of sentimentality and bathos, and many that are purely utilitarian and didactic.

The poems are arranged, in the supposed order of their difficulty, under the following titles: Part I: *Rhymes for Little Ones (didactic verses), Cradle Songs, Nursery Rhymes, Fairy Land, Fables and Riddles*; Part II: *The Seasons, Fields and Woods, Home, Insects, Birds and Beasts, Humorous Verse, The Fatherland, Ballads, Girlhood, Miscellaneous, Hymns.*

LUCAS, EDWARD VERRALL. *A Book of Verses for Children.* Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1909.

The preface, addressed to children, is as follows: "Unless you

are very keenly set upon reading to yourself, I think I should advise you to ask some one to read these pieces aloud, not too many at a time. And I want you to understand that there is a kind of poetry that is far finer than anything here: poetry to which this book is, in the old-fashioned phrase, simply a stepping-stone. When you feel, as I hope some day you will feel, that these pages no longer satisfy, then you must turn to the better things." From this statement we infer that the editor intended the book largely to please the younger children and to represent the lighter forms of verse; and this inference is borne out by an examination of the volume. Mr. Lucas has ranged far and wide to find these verses, and, within the limits he set for himself, he has made a varied and excellent anthology. It contains a great many poems that are graceful and pleasant and gay, as well as many that are solid and sensible. Moreover, the volume contains many poems that are not to be found in any other collection.

The material is grouped under the following descriptive titles: *Two Thoughts, The Open Air, The Year, Christmas, The Country Life, Blossoms from Herrick and Blake, Birds, Dogs and Horses. Compressed Natural History, Unnatural History, Poets at Play, Counsel, Old-Fashioned Girls, Marjorie Fleming, Poetess, Old-Fashioned Boys, Looking Forward, From "Hiawatha," Good Fellows, The Sea and the Island, A Bundle of Stories, Bedtime.* The editor makes no attempt to arrange the poems in the order of their difficulty; in fact, the pieces are of about the same degree of difficulty throughout. He addresses some characteristic notes to children under the title of *A Few Remarks.*

LUCAS, EDWARD VERRALL. *Another Book of Verses for Children.* The Macmillan Company, New York, 1919.

In his preface, the editor says: "Of the present collection of verses, as of that which preceded it ten years ago, I would say that it consists not so much of poetry, as of poetry-for-children. It is, like that, merely a preparation for the real thing. Their fitness for being read aloud was always present in my mind when choosing the contents." It is a companion to *A Book of Verses for Children*, and almost as engaging. No one has more familiarity with the innermost recesses of a child's heart than Mr. Lucas and few have his exquisite feeling for good poetry.

The volume contains a great many poems, presenting them under the following titles: *The Four Seasons*, *Friends in the Village*, *Little Fowls of the Air*, *Ballads of Dumb Creatures*, *The Country Round*, *From the Stream to the Sea*, *Ballads of Sailor Men*, *When Great-Great-Grandmamma was Young*, *Easy Lessons in Grammar and Geography*, *The Genius of the Hearthrug* (poems on the Cat), *The Rhymes of the Lighthearted*, *A Budget of Stories*, *Hiawatha and Kwasind*, *Ballads of Battle*, *Children's Books*, *Good Night*, *The Lesson Beautiful*, *Poems in the Notes*, *A Farewell Bunch*.

McMURRY, LIDA BROWN, AND COOK, AGNES SPOFFORD. *Songs of the Tree-top and Meadow*. Public School Publishing Company, Bloomington, Illinois, 1899.

The following statement is found in the preface to this work: "No mere doggerel, no preaching, no morbid note of sadness or the retrospect of age may be allowed, but only such poems as the teacher has found, from actual trial with many children, to be of value in developing a love for poetry and in stimulating the impulse toward beautiful thought and unselfish action." *Songs of Tree-top and Meadow* is a collection for the very first grades of school. The selections are arranged by seasons: *For Autumn Days*, *For Winter Days*, *For Rainy Days*, *For Spring Days*, *For Summer Days*. It contains a good deal of the doggerel and preaching which the editors, in the preface, condemn, but most of the verses are first-rate as poetry and first-rate as children's poetry. Most of the poetry deals with Nature. The pedagogical intent is obvious.

OLCOTT, FRANCES JENKINS. *Story-Telling Poems*. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1913.

"Selected and arranged for story-telling and reading aloud and for the children's own reading," says the editor's announcement. Miss Olcott suggests that the children should have the story of the poem told to them first, then have the poem read to them. "In this volume are brought together fables, legends, and tales of humor and feeling, of fairy-lore and magic, historical stories, parables, and sacred stories. . . . The rhymes and poems are selected for their story-telling qualities, for their lively interest to children, for their humorous, imaginative, and ethical values, and, as far as possible, for their literary form." In the last aspect,

however, the editor has failed, for some of the verses are poor stuff. The story in them is usually good, but as specimens of literary art they are by no means good. Perhaps this failure was inevitable in a collection made for the specific purpose the editor had in mind. Certainly, in other respects the anthology is a very good one. It is best suited to the older children, though doubtless the younger ones would enjoy hearing the stories told and having the poems read to them. Many of the selections have been condensed or expurgated.

The index is a good one and the poems are well classified under the following titles: *Deeds of Right and Wrong; Fairies, Magic, and Mystery; Jolly Rhymes and Poems; Sad Poems; Historical Legends and Stories; Sacred Stories and Legends.*

Our Children's Songs. Harper and Brothers, New York, 1877.

This book is without a preface. The aim of the editor, whose name does not appear on the title page, seems to have been to present specimens of the best poetry for children of all ages. The verses range from the nonsensical to the pathetic and tragic; the editor evidently desired to present poetry covering every possible mood and on every possible theme within the interests of childhood. There is, perhaps, too great a preponderance of the lyric over the narrative. Many of the children's classics are found, but much of the material is from the lesser lights of poetry. In the selection of these, however, the editor's taste has been liberal and yet unerring; practically every selection in the volume is real literature. The group of poems for smaller children and the group of sacred songs are especially noteworthy. All told, it is a rich and satisfactory anthology.

Our Children's Songs is divided into five parts: *Songs for the Nursery, Songs for Childhood, Songs for Girlhood, Songs for Boyhood, and Our Children's Sacred Songs.*

PALGRAVE, FRANCIS TURNER. *Children's Treasury of English Song.* The Macmillan Company, New York, 1913. (First published in 1875.)

"This selection is planned for children between nine or ten, and fifteen or sixteen years of age. . . . Nothing has been here admitted which does not reach a high rank of poetical merit. . . .

The editor's wish has been to collect all songs, narratives, descriptions, or reflective pieces of a lyrical quality, fit to give pleasure,—high, pure, manly (and therefore lasting),—to children in the stage between early childhood and early youth. . . . The standard of 'merit in poetry' has excluded a certain number of popular favorites. But the standard of 'suitability to childhood,' as here understood, has excluded many more pieces: pictures of life as it seems to middle age—poems colored by sentimentalism or morbid melancholy, however attractive to readers no longer children—love as a personal passion or regret (not love as the groundwork of action)—artificial or highly allusive language—have, as a rule, been held unfit." In these words, the famous editor of this splendid anthology sets forth the principles upon which his selections were made. He wishes to show children the path to the "great and glorious world of English poetry." The collection is unusually rich in poems of an early day. But this is not to say that the best specimens of modern poetry have not been included. The editor's discriminating taste has enabled him to produce a distinctive volume; but the poetry is too serious and dignified and literary to be popular with most children, and notwithstanding the editor's purpose, he has included certain poems that are beyond the interests of childhood.

The book is divided into two parts. Palgrave has a happy faculty for grouping poems by similarity or contrast, and the titles, though sometimes strained, are usually apt and striking.

PATMORE, COVENTRY. *The Children's Garland from the Best Poets*. The Macmillan Company, New York, 1917. (First published in 1861.)

"The test applied in the work of selection has been that of having actually pleased intelligent children; and my object has been to make a book which shall be to them no more nor less than a book of equally good poetry is to intelligent grown persons. . . . Children will not like this volume the less because, though containing little or nothing which will not at once please and amuse them, it also contains much, the full excellence of which they may not as yet be able to understand." This, the editor's guiding principle, led him to exclude nearly all verse written expressly for children, and most of the poetry written about children for grown people. A few poems were judiciously altered and

abridged. There is nothing in the book but first-rate literature, drawn from the whole range of lyrical and narrative poetry, and selected with good taste. Many of the great poets are represented (Wordsworth is perhaps mis-represented: at any rate, the editor made his selections from this poet with singular infelicity) and there is a liberal proportion of old ballads and songs. Only a few of the poems are by American authors. The selections are arranged by no principle, either in the order of their difficulty or by theme or mood. In this respect the collection is unsatisfactory. Mr. Patmore shows his understanding of older children by giving them a number of poems which are weird, imaginative, and tragic. As the first edition of this famous anthology appeared in 1861, poetry of a later date is not to be found therein.

REPPLIER, AGNES. *A Book of Famous Verse*. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1892.

"In selecting these few poems I have had no other motive than to give pleasure to the children who may read them; and I have tried to study their taste, and feelings, and desires. . . . The enjoyment which children receive from poetry is far-reaching and of many kinds. Martial strains which fire the blood, fairy music ringing in the ears, half-told tales which set the young heart dreaming, brave deeds, unhappy fates, somber ballads, keen joyous lyrics, and small jeweled verses where every word shines like a polished gem,—all these good things the children know and love. It is useless to offer them mere rhymes and jingles; it is ungenerous to stint their young, vigorous imaginations with obvious prattle, fitted dexterously to their understandings. In the matter of poetry, a child's imagination outstrips his understanding; his emotions carry him far beyond the narrow reach of his intelligence." . . . *Preface*.

This is a splendid collection of classic poetry; not a piece has been included which does not rank high in literary merit. Different themes and moods are represented in great variety, the only decided weakness being the omission of all light and humorous verse. The collector has chosen very little for the youngest readers, and she has occasionally erred in including poems the predominant emotions of which are not childish.

The selections are not arranged by any principle or rule, but are scattered hit-or-miss throughout the volume.

STEVENSON, BURTON EGBERT. *The Home Book of Verse for Young Folks*. Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1915.

One of the largest collections of children's verse yet published—a veritable storehouse of poetic riches. There is no preface; so far as a critic can determine, Mr. Stevenson intended the volume to be representative of all the different kinds of children's verse which may be considered as literature. He takes his poetry from any and every source: from folk-poetry, from the classics that appeal to children, from poetry written for children, from the old and the modern, from English and American stores alike. Discriminating taste and sympathy, an understanding of child nature, and a scholarly knowledge of children's poetry have contributed to the excellence of this splendid collection.

The poems are grouped under somewhat fanciful titles, as follows: *In the Nursery*, *The Duty of Children*, *Rhymes of Childhood*, *Just Nonsense*, *Fairyland*, *The Glad Evangel*, *This Wonderful World*, *Stories in Rhyme*, *My Country*, *The Happy Warrior*, *Life Lessons*, *A Garland of Gold*. The poems are not arranged in the order of their difficulty but rather according to the awakening interest of young readers.

TAPPAN, EVA MARCH. *Poems and Rhymes*. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1907.

This is volume nine of the ten-volume set of books called *The Children's Hour*.

There is not much that is new in this anthology, but the editor has shown good judgment in her selections. Most of the poetry is modern, and a great deal of it American. Children of every age and temperament will find something of interest and value in the book. The contents and arrangement of the volume are indicated by the following divisions: *Poems about Children*, *Story-telling Poems*, *Nonsense Verse*, *Songs*, *Christmas Poems*, *Poems of Nature*, *Poems of our Country*, *Poems to think about*, *Other Poems*.

TEASDALE, SARA. *Rainbow Gold*. The Macmillan Company, New York, 1922.

A charming collection, a poet's anthology. Illustrated by Dugald

Walker. Miss Teasdale chose the poems "that would have pleased the child I used to be and the boy who was my playmate. . . . The poems that they loved best had highly accented rhythms, and took them into 'a land of clear colors and stories.'" While most of the poems are by the older poets, there are more by living writers than in any other anthology.

THACHER, LUCY. *The Listening Child*. The Macmillan Company, New York, 1917.

The first edition of this popular anthology appeared in 1899. The 1917 edition is a very attractive volume. The editor has endeavored, apparently, to present poems that stir the imagination of children. She believes that great poems can be appreciated by children as well as by their elders; she therefore presents very few that were written especially for children. "There are poems here that may puzzle the largest of you," she says, "but there are none which are beyond the hearing of the smallest." It would seem that Miss Thacher intends the poems to be read aloud to children. Notwithstanding her statement, the collection contains very few poems for little tots. The chief poets of England and America are represented and a fitting number of poems selected from each one. Both lyrics and narrative poems are found, well mingled. There are, perhaps, not enough humorous pieces. The editor has exhibited a rare taste in poetry and a true understanding of child nature in the preparation of this charming book.

It is one of the few collections of children's verse in which the order of arrangement represents the chronological periods of literary history.

WHITTIER, JOHN GREENLEAF. *Child Life*. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1871.

One of the earliest collections of verse for children, and to this day one of the finest. To this collection all later editors of children's poetry are, consciously or unconsciously, indebted. It is a poet's collection. When Whittier made this anthology, he expressed the hope that his readers would find it "combining simplicity with a certain degree of literary excellence, without on the one hand descending to silliness, or, on the other, rising above the average comprehension of children." He acknowledges the

assistance given him by Lucy Larcom. His own religious nature is apparent in the preface, but he wisely refrained from including too many religious or moral verses. He ranged widely and wisely over English and American poetry, and has gathered up not a few translations from the Italian, German, and Scandinavian poetry of childhood. As might have been expected, the poems are chosen with an unerring instinct for the beautiful, in theme and in form, although, of course, a collection made fifty years ago must inevitably lack many of the great modern poems for children.

WIGGIN, KATE DOUGLAS, AND SMITH, NORA ARCHIBALD. *Golden Numbers: A Book of Verse for Youth*. Doubleday, Page and Company, New York, 1915.

This anthology was first published in 1902. The poems it contains have been selected with exquisite taste from many fields, but especially from the more modern and the more classic poets. The material in this volume is both useful and beautiful. Its contents are subdivided as follows: *A Chanted Calendar* (the months and seasons), *The World Beautiful*, *Green Things Growing*, *On the Wing* (birds and insects), *The Inglenook* (home and family life), *Fairy Songs and Songs of Fancy*, *Sports and Pastimes*, *A Garden of girls*, *The World of Waters*, *For Home and Country*, *New World and Old Glory* (poems of American history and patriotism), *In Merry Mood*, *Story Poems*, *Romance and Reality*, *When Banners are Waving* (war poems), *Tales of Olden Time* (old ballads), *Life Lessons*, *The Glad Evangel* (poems of Christmas).

———. *The Posy Ring*. Doubleday, Page and Company, New York, 1917.

This anthology was first published in 1903. It is a companion volume to *Golden Numbers*, intended for younger children. Characterized by the same discriminating taste displayed by the editors in their former work, it is even more catholic in its scope.

The poems are listed under the following happily-chosen titles: *A Year's Windfall* (the months and seasons), *The Child's World* (inanimate nature), *Hiawatha's Chickens* (the birds), *The Flower Folk*, *Hiawatha's Brothers* (animals), *Other Little Children*, *Play Time*, *Story Time*, *Bed Time*, *For Sunday's Child*, *Bells of Christmas*.

———. *Pinafore Palace*. The McClure Company, New York, 1907.

The third book of the Wiggin-Smith series. This one is for the wee folk. It consists of two parts: *The Royal Baby* (Mother Goose jingles), and *Little Prince and Princess* (poems by both unknown and well-known authors for children). This is not so original a collection as the other two volumes by these talented editors, but it deserves a place in the library of the tiny child.

(B) SOME OTHER CHILDREN'S POETS

THE poets whose works are listed in the following notes are perhaps the most important, aside from those already treated in these pages, of all those who have tried their hand at verse-making for children. Their contributions may not appear striking, they may not represent so much that is new in style and substance as the great masters of their craft, but they are genuine poets of childhood none the less and deserve a small corner in the children's starry field. In the descriptive notes I have endeavored to indicate their special qualities. No book that is out of print, so far as I know, is listed, and the poets are arranged alphabetically for convenience of reference.

BROWN, ABBIE FARWELL. *A Pocketful of Posies*. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1902.

Many of the poems in this volume were reprinted from the *Youth's Companion*, *St. Nicholas*, and other juvenile magazines. Tales, sketches, ideas, fancies, in straightforward verse. Miss Brown delights in quaint fancies; she is the only children's poet who uses puns effectively. Plenty of first-rate fun in these poems, though some of it is too fine-spun for the robust taste of most children. An occasional serious poem, for the most part sincere and unaffected and wholesome. Style natural. The poet is faithful to the nature of childhood.

BURGESS, GELETT. *Goops, and How to be Them*. Frederick A. Stokes Company, New York, 1900.

A large number of amusing illustrations. One of the most successful attempts to write children's verse combining fun and lessons on manners and morals. The Goops are ridiculous little creatures, who always do the wrong thing, and who, by the punishment meted out to them and the ridicule heaped upon them, point morals for the young readers and listeners. Thoroughly amusing, in a wholesome fashion.

Mr. Burgess has made several other agreeable books for children, but the volume mentioned above is perhaps the best of the lot.

CARY, ALICE AND PHŒBE. *Poems for Children*. (In *Poetical Works*.) Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1882.

Incidents and scenes of home and country life. The authors present many lessons in a frank, straightforward manner, with compelling earnestness and in forceful, graceful phrasing. Many of the poems are humorous. In theme, style, and treatment they are within the child's range of interests and feelings. Although the Cary sisters' poetry lacks the pure singing quality which is characteristic of the best poetry for children, it is notable for its good sense, solidity of thought, and power of phrasing.

CAWEIN, MADISON. *The Giant and the Star*. Small, Maynard and Company, Boston, 1909.

Attractive verses, though they rank far below Cawein's verse for adults. Written, for the most part, from the standpoint of a boy of eight to twelve years of age: his thoughts, fancies, fears, wishes, and scenes and incidents of his daily life. A few of the poems are messages of a father to his son; and the poet-father figures in nearly all the pieces. True to boy nature. The poet frequently falls into a sort of juvenile dialect in the James Whitcomb Riley fashion; but the colloquialisms are strangely mingled with words lying outside the average child's vocabulary. Nevertheless a few of the poems rank high as children's verse, and altogether they give a capital picture of normal childhood.

DODGE, MARY MAPES. *Rhymes and Jingles*. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1916.

The poet covers almost the whole range of children's interests: play, toys, work, animals, nature, companions, home life. Good variety also in mood and tone and poetic forms. Excellent fun, ranging from pure nonsense to quaint fancy. Little didactic intent, and that little sanely and sensibly expressed. The style is spirited and natural. Mrs. Dodge has succeeded in writing for children without writing down to them. Nearly every bit of verse in this volume is true to the facts—or at least the fancies—of childhood. In every respect a charming volume.

———. *When Life Is Young*. The Century Company, New York, 1913.

A collection of poems for children somewhat older than those who would enjoy *Rhymes and Jingles*. Characterized by the steady sense and insight into child-life that made the author for so many years the successful editor of *St. Nicholas*.

EARLS, MICHAEL. *Ballads of Childhood*. Benziger Brothers, New York, 1914.

Poems on nature, children, indoor fancies. In theme, mood, and technique Father Earls' *Ballads of Childhood* reminds one of Stevenson's immortal collection. Nearly all the poems are more or less serious, and a few deal with religious themes. There is a glint of humor in them, however, and a delightfully child-like atmosphere. Style rich and suggestive. Splendid lyrical quality. A delightful volume, pleasing alike to children and to lovers of children.

FENOLLOSA, MARY. *Blossoms from a Japanese Garden*. Frederick A. Stokes Company, New York, 1913.

An unusual contribution to the library of children's poetry. Beautifully illustrated in color by Japanese artists. The stories and scenes are all concerned with the life of Japanese children, their thoughts and feelings and outlook on their world. Yet in spite of this, most of the poems are within the range of interests of American children. The poems are fanciful and quaint, at times humorous; and always artistic in conception and execution. The diction is pure and dignified, yet not too far removed from the vocabulary of children. This volume of child-verse deserves to be more widely known.

LAMB, CHARLES AND MARY. *Poetry for Children*. Vol. VIII of *The Works of Charles Lamb*, in 12 volumes. J. M. Dent and Company, London, 1903. E. P. Dutton and Company, New York.

An interesting introductory essay by William MacDonald. Many illustrations by Winifred Green, somewhat in the manner of Kate Greenaway.

A reprint of all the children's poetry by Charles and Mary Lamb which has been discovered: *Poetry for Children*, 1809; *Prince Borus*, 1811; *Beauty and the Beast*, 1811 (attributed to either Charles or Mary Lamb, but perhaps not by either); and *The King and Queen of Hearts*, 1809. This volume should be in the library of all students of children's poetry.

The subjects of the poems are varied: incidents of child life, character sketches, sermonettes on the minor moralities, and so forth. Nearly all the poems are in the Jane and Ann Taylor style, and in most respects they are inferior to the work of the Taylors. However, the morals, though plain and blunt, are expressed with honesty and sincerity and good sense. Little humor. The authors, as might be expected, have not quite succeeded in getting the child's point of view, and the style is somewhat bookish. Mr. MacDonald, in the introductory essay, gives the book high praise: "It differs from all other books of the kind, in its true moral and intellectual substantiality, in its matterfulness, in the body of good thinking and good feeling that it contains."

PEABODY, JOSEPHINE PRESTON. *The Book of the Little Past*. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1912.

Poems expressing the fancies, the feelings, the intuitions and vague longings of a little girl—who might have been the twin sister of the little boy in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Garden*. Tender, wistful, understanding hints of girl-life, expressed in a style at once literary and informal—in which respect also it resembles Stevenson's poetry. Occasional bits of the arch humor so characteristic of children's utterances. Most of the poems have the true musical quality. All in all, one of the finest groups of child poems of the last quarter-century, and superior to all others as a picture of the brooding, fanciful life of a little girl.

PYLE, KATHARINE. *Careless Jane and Other Tales*. E. P. Dutton and Company, New York, 1902.

Versified stories about disobedient, mischievous, careless children, who one and all become involved in mishaps, but escape and reform. Mingled amusement and suggestions to "mind your tricks and your manners." Clearly imitative of the Taylors' poetry, even the drawings being in the early Victorian style. Language

prosaic and barren. Rhythm accurate, but other lyrical qualities lacking. These rhymes take rank with Burgess' *Goop* books.

SAGE, BETTY. *Rhymes of Real Children*. Duffield and Company, New York, 1914.

Pleasant verses for the smaller children. The poet rarely leaves the nursery, though she writes occasionally of birds and other "friendly beasts." Plenty of good wholesome fun, of the sort that appeals to children. As the title suggests, the scenes and moods are concerned with the normal, everyday life of real children; there is nothing ethereal or fanciful in the verses. The style is simple and natural, and not too babyfied. Attractive pictures of child life. Illustrated with several full-page drawings by Jessie Wilcox Smith.

TABB, JOHN BANNISTER. *Child Verses: Poems Grave and Gay*. Small, Maynard and Company, Boston, 1899.

Clever little poems, conceived by the poet's fancy and written in a half-serious, half-humorous style. Many quaint whimsies and delightful puns. Flowers, birds, insects, the weather and the seasons, supply the themes. A dozen pretty religious pieces are found toward the end of the volume. These poems are suggestive of Stevenson and Sherman, but are much more fanciful. The language is natural and unaffected, full of vivid imagery. Nearly all the poems are extremely musical—fully up to the standard of Father Tabb's beautiful verse.

TAGORE, RABINDRANATH. *The Crescent Moon*. The Macmillan Company, New York, 1915.

The author's English prose translation of his Bengali poetry. A charming book. The venerable Hindu poet shows a keen insight into the workings of a child's mind. Some of the poems are obviously poems about children rather than for them, but not a few are written from a child's point of view. These poems are mystical and full of delicate, subtle fancies. The style is the beautiful, simple prose of which Tagore is master; it has a naïveté and biblical sincerity, which is irresistibly appealing.

WATTS, ISAAC. *Divine and Moral Songs for the Use of Children*. John van Voorst, London, 1848. A good modern edition is published by L. C. Page and Company, Boston, but there have been numerous editions of this famous book.

One of the earliest collections of verse addressed directly to children. For more than two hundred years, down almost to this last generation, it was assigned to the first rank as children's religious verse. Only two of Watts's poems seem to be known to children of today—"How doth the Little Busy Bee" and "A Cradle Hymn"—and the first has been parodied out of its beauty, while the second has to be expurgated before it fits modern taste. Dignified poetry and genuinely religious, composed to be sung to hymn tunes. Watts tried to "sink the language to the level of a child's understanding, and yet keep it, if possible, above contempt," but it is doubtful if he succeeded in either aim.

WELLS, CAROLYN. *The Jingle Book*. The Macmillan Company, New York, 1901. Illustrations by Oliver Herford.

Jokes in verse, in Miss Wells's happiest vein. Stories, merry quips and fancies, jingles, limericks, all laughter-provoking, in animated, jingling verse. The volume should be in the nursery library of every home.

WENTWORTH, PATRICIA. *A Child's Rhyme Book*. G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1911.

Beautiful illustrations by Grace M. Morgan. Musical settings are given for a few of the poems.

The themes of most of the poems in this volume are connected with a child's life, activities, and thoughts indoors. Genuine poetry of the second class. Style rich and full of color. A touch of fun here and there. Little ethical content. True to the spirit and mood of one phase of childhood, and will prove attractive to a certain type of children.

INDEX TO AUTHORS, EDITORS, TITLES, AND FIRST LINES OF POEMS

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